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REMINGTON & CO., HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

# MEMOIRS OF MISS MELLON

AFTERWARDS

DUCHESS OF ST. ALBANS

BY

MRS CORNWELL BARRON-WILSON

//

*Author of "The Life & Correspondence of M. G. Lewis."*

IN TWO VOLUMES

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VOL I

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NEW EDITION

London

REMINGTON & CO PUBLISHERS

HENRIETTA STREET COVENT GARDEN

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1887

10/10/22

10/10/22

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## CONTENTS.

	PAGE
PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION ... ..	9

### CHAPTER I.

Introductory remarks—Summary of character ... ..	17
--	----

### CHAPTER II.

Parents of the Duchess of St. Albans—Their early history —Her mother's family—Arrival of strolling players— "Romeo and Juliet" in a barn—Death of the Duchess's grandfather—Removal to Cork—Death of her grand- mother—Her mother's avocations—Joins the strolling players—Tour in North Wales—Returns to Cork— Puritanical lover—Arrival of Mr. Mellon—Parti- culars of his history—Love, courtship, and marriage— Alleged nobility—Reminiscence of childhood—Re- moval to London—Mr. Mellon embarks for India— Birth of Harriot—Death of Mr. Mellon at sea—Anec- dotes of her mother—Her violence of temper— Treatment of Harriot ... ..	35
--	----

### CHAPTER III.

Her mother again joins the players—Marriage with Mr. Entwisle—His history—Visionary claims—Anecdote of Mrs. Siddons—Harriot sent to school—Anecdotes
--

240438



	PAGE
—Serious effects of her mother's violence—Mr. and Mrs. Entwisle join another company of comedians—The eccentric Thomas Bibby—Lodgings, salary, and circumstances—State of the drama at Ulverstone—Miss Mellon's character as a school-girl—Her mother's attention to her education—Miss Calvert and her school—Harriot's first appearance on the stage, as a mute—Her singing, dancing, and accomplishments—Early day-dreams—First appearance in character, as Little Pickle—Priscilla Tomboy—Dressing for the stage—Juvenile characters—Improvement in her profession...	56

## CHAPTER IV.

Mrs. Jordan—T. Dibdin and "London stars" at Harrogate—Revolt in the green-room—Miss Wallis—Her appearance and history—Embarrassment as to night quarters—Novel bedchamber—Dibdin's reminiscences—Old playbill—Ludicrous anecdote—Joins another company at Stafford—"Sharing" plan—Harriot's wardrobe—Church-going—"High blood"—Early society—Juvenile terrors—Coffin bursting—Anecdote of her mother's violence—Improved circumstances—Private carriages—Early friends ...	82
--	----

## CHAPTER V.

Travelling extraordinary—Gallantry of a letter carrier—Its unfortunate result—Stafford Theatre—Habits of Mr. Entwisle—Domestic scenes—Friend's pony—Anecdote—Poor prisoners—Sheridan's visit to Stafford—Sees Miss Mellon, and promises an engagement at Drury Lane—Anecdote—Removal to London	115
--	-----

## CHAPTER VI.

London—She waits upon Sheridan—His appearance and character—His oblivion of the promise made—Lodgings in London—Anecdote of a hackney-coach-	
--	--

	PAGE
man—Removal to meaner lodgings—Embarrassments —State of wardrobe—Sheridan at last fulfils his promise—Interview—Engagement— <i>Début</i> as Lydia Languish—Michaelmas goose ... ..	136

## CHAPTER VII.

Performers at Drury Lane in 1795—Appearance of the house—"Lodoiska"—Characters played by Miss Mel- lon—Hair-dresser—Plays Miss Farren's and Mrs. Jor- dan's characters—Mr. Braham's first appearance at Drury Lane—Opera rehearsal—Personal appearance —Reminiscences of a contemporary actor—Miss Farren—Earl of Derby—Anecdotes ... ..	149
--	-----

## CHAPTER VIII.

Engagement at Liverpool—Character of that theatre— Success there—Anecdote and kindness of Mrs. Siddons —Benefit—Returns to London—Continued improve- ment—Love of flowers—Change of lodgings— Anecdote—Act of kindness—Jews' festivities—Novel footstool ... ..	172
--	-----

## CHAPTER IX.

Death of Countess of Derby—Miss Farren leaves the stage—Cicely Copesley in "The Will"—Reynolds' reminiscences—Removes again to Liverpool—Mrs. Siddons' arrears at Drury Lane—Liverpool merchants —Volunteer artillery—Disturbance at the theatre— Benefit—Anecdote of a sailor ... ..	190
--	-----

## CHAPTER X.

Returns to Drury Lane—New comedy—Advance in characters—First solo at Drury Lane—Mr. Graham —Sir Henry and Lady Tempest—Holly Lodge— Miss Goddard—Liverpool—Anecdotes—Death of Palmer on the stage—London... ..	204
--	-----

## CHAPTER XI.

	PAGE
Performances at Drury Lane—Improved class of characters—"Rule a Wife and Have a Wife"—Covent Garden management—Professional offers—Visit to Epsom Theatre, and its consequences .. ...	226

## CHAPTER XII.

Continuation of theatrical career—Miss Mellon visits Southampton—Private theatricals—Contemporary actors and their salaries—Expenses of Drury Lane—Theatricals continued—Actress's paint ... ..	239
---	-----

## CHAPTER XIII.

Love and courtship—Its unlucky termination—New friend—Mr. and Mrs. Entwisle remove to Cheltenham—Joint benefit at Drury Lane—Visits Cheltenham—Anecdote—Story about "green peas!" ... ..	259
--	-----

## CHAPTER XIV.

Theatricals continued—History of the "Honeymoon"—Secession of Mrs. Jordan—Succeeds to her characters—Benefit—Green-room—Obtains the office of post-master for Entwisle—House at Cheltenham—Master of the ceremonies—Benefit at Cheltenham—Mr. Coutts—First acquaintance with Miss Mellon—The purse of "luck money." ... ..	277
--	-----

## CHAPTER XV.

Season of 1805-6: critique on a play which did not appear—"The School for Friends"—Master Betty—Charles Lamb and "Mr. H."—Destruction of both the royal houses by fire—Sir John Duckworth: his taste for Melons and passion for pigs—The "Mock Doctor"—Mrs. Entwisle a promoter of Mr. Coutts's marriage with her daughter—Mr. Coutts's worsted stockings—Mr. Coutts mistaken for a distressed person... ..	293
---	-----

## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

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ON the demise of any individual well known to the public, it may be generally observed that the opposite feelings of praise and censure are for a time more active than during their existence. In some cases, these “sittings in judgment” are confined to conversation, and form the topic of a “nine days’ wonder;” but in more distinguished instances they embody themselves into biographical memoranda, sketches, or more extended works.

The Duchess of St. Albans having been one of the most remarkable persons of her day, her death was followed by the latter result; and as malice is ever most active, a slanderous memoir, prepared during her lifetime, and including anecdotes of the families with whom she was connected by marriage, was *immediately* advertised. The publication of this anonymous work was stopped by the announcement

of another "Memoir," under a name whose literary and moral reputation was a sufficient guarantee for the fidelity of any biography to which it might be attached. This well-timed act for the departed ended, however, with the beneficial result of having checked the effusion of malice and ill-nature; and subsequent circumstances preventing its completion the field became again fairly open.

The materials from which the following pages have been compiled were collected for, and entrusted to me for examination and arrangement. Before, however, I accepted the editorship, and ventured on ground which the on-dits of the day might have led the public still to suppose pre-occupied, I applied to the party who had announced the second biography already alluded to; and received a written assurance that the work "had long since been entirely abandoned;" and therefore, as my projected publication could in no way affect a work totally relinquished, I proceeded with my task.

The rough notes, or, to use a mercantile phrase, the "raw material" placed in my hands, bore the fullest evidence that no trouble had been spared in collecting authentic details. The few surviving companions of the poor provincial actress, and the "troops of friends" of the much-sought, because rich, Mrs. Coutts and Duchess of St. Albans, have since been industriously traced out and consulted;



even the foes which envy made when she bore the latter names have been communicated with. Add to this, I have to return my sincere thanks to several individuals who, in answer to my application for intelligence, communicated many interesting facts and anecdotes.

To test the accuracy of information, from whatever source it has been afforded me, I have also, in every instance where it might be of use, consulted newspapers and other public records, and have been able, by private papers in my possession, to trace many a mere "report" to its origin, and thus to affix to it its just degree of truth or falsehood.

I will not in this place offer any detailed opinion on the private character of the Duchess of St. Albans. If my ideas of her moral conduct—formed, after much deliberation, from the documents from which this work is compiled, and from circumstances communicated directly to me—had not been far more favourable towards her than those generally entertained, I would not have undertaken the task which I have diligently, and I hope satisfactorily, performed. Before, however, a high, or even a not unfavourable opinion of the propriety of *all* Miss Mellon's conduct can be entertained, there is one circumstance which requires to be placed in its true light—namely, her friendship for, and subsequent marriage with, Mr. Coutts. In reference to

these circumstances, I must briefly advert to a previous period. When Mr. Coutts became acquainted with Miss Mellon, he introduced her to his three excellent daughters, and their intimacy soon increased to almost daily intercourse, which continued without interruption until the time of her marriage; so that, with her affectionate nature, her attachment soon centred in his family, which neither time nor other connexions had ever the power to remove.

As Mr. Coutts was exceedingly scrupulous regarding the perfect respectability of his future wife, in addition to introducing his friends to her house, he never allowed her to be without a female companion, a lady of good connexions and irreproachable conduct, who permanently resided with her.

From the total absence of levity in Miss Mellon's demeanour, and the deference of her manners towards her benefactor, an impression that she was his daughter became at that time very generally entertained; and it is not improbable that Mr. Coutts tolerated the supposition, to save his family from pain, and Miss Mellon from the awkwardness of being then recognized as the future successor of Mrs. Coutts.

After the demise of Mr. Coutts, the disappointed inferior associates whom his widow had relinquished at his desire beset her for money; several with threats of vengeance, through the press, in case of

non-compliance. These, of course, she refused and defied; and in return they attacked her most bitterly with false representations, of which some of the more respectable portions of the press were the inadvertent disseminators.

Mrs. Coutts therefore resolved to prosecute some of the editors, who, she considered, neither knowing nor caring anything respecting her, would give up the original slanderers who had misled them. Several of them she had traced by agents.

Lords Brougham and Abinger were retained by Mrs. Coutts, who summoned the Marquis of Bristol, the Earl of Lauderdale, Sir Coutts Trotter, the late Sir Edmund Antrobus, and many other distinguished persons (upon whose judgment Mr. Coutts had, in his lifetime, most relied) to consult on the case.

A portion of the valuable documents produced and referred to it may not be irrelevant here to describe, as mentioned by those who saw them. They consisted of a great quantity of letters from the daughters of Mr. Coutts to Miss Mellon, during many years, up to the time of her marriage, all couched in the most affectionate terms, making daily appointments for accompanying their father to Miss Mellon's house, or meeting him there, giving frequent details of their mother's health, or forming arrangements for bringing parties of their friends to Miss Mellon's villa at Highgate: all showing, by

their playful allusions, an almost sisterly intercourse between her and these admirably conducted persons. At that time they were all married to men of high rank, who likewise visited Miss Mellon, and received her among their youthful families.

There were also numbers of epistles from the distinguished and brilliant of those days, not mere matters of compliment, but denoting regard and respect for her, both when Miss Mellon and Mrs. Coutts.

Finally, there were the series of private letters written to her by Mr. Coutts before and after their marriage, containing such advice, praise, and reproof as a father might write to one of her hasty but good disposition. These were imbued with a pure spirit of devotion, and a refined, though unworldly and romantic, view of human nature. He spoke of "the absurd reports of disappointed borrowers as beneath contradiction, for that all whose opinion he valued were certain of the blamelessness of his patronage;" and he alluded to the marriage as "having given an old man an opportunity of bestowing wealth on a deserving individual (as a reward for her good conduct and attention to him) without affording ground for slander after his decease."

The distinguished advisers who perused these documents said that *they* had never entertained a doubt as to the strict propriety of Miss Mellon's

conduct : that the contents of those documents must carry conviction even to the most prejudiced ; and that the slanderous reports were quite beneath her notice, or any legal proceeding.

Mrs. Coutts, always impetuous in her ideas, differed strongly from the last-mentioned point ; but, having placed the matter beyond her own decision, she had no alternative but to abide by the judgment given, therefore she relinquished (though most unwillingly) the contemplated prosecution.

Parties who had expressed themselves unfavourably regarding the late duchess, have, since her demise, been applied to in order to ascertain if they had any knowledge or just grounds for their opinion ; but the answer has uniformly been that they did not know anything whatever against her, as their impressions had been derived from some of the newspapers.

The press has been exonerated from having originated several erroneous and offensive statements, which have been merely published in continuation of former satirical contributions, and these emanated from the numerous enemies whose malice always attends the rapid rise of an humble individual to rank and fortune.

To those who were in habits of close intimacy with the late Duchess of St. Albans during the greater portion of her career, these statements will,



doubtless, seem superfluous. But confirmation can do no injury to a fact; and as the breath of malignity *has* endeavoured to taint her fair fame, it is a duty due to her memory, as well as one I owe myself, to set before the reader a *true* account of the chief incident of her life which has been seized upon for slanderous attacks.

I cannot conclude without publicly offering my thanks for the highly interesting reminiscences of the duchess during her sojourns at Brighton,\* which have been sent to me by a gentleman of distinguished literary reputation, who has long been a resident of that place. These are so highly creditable to the duchess in every point of view, that they came most happily in aid and confirmation of that favourable opinion of her which has been one of my chief inducements to the present undertaking.

MARGARET BARON-WILSON.

*London,*  
*October, 1839.*

\* See chap. ix, vol. ii.

## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTORY REMARKS—SUMMARY OF CHARACTER.

THE character of the late Duchess of St. Albans has been so frequently misrepresented during many years, and was indeed so little understood by those who merely met her in society, that a main object in commencing these memoirs is to give a just impression of her natural qualities rather than a regular narrative of her life.

Hence arises the innovation of commencing with the following brief summary of the prominent qualities of her nature, with the hope of creating an interest for the individual whose career will then be described. The unreserved frankness with which she placed both thoughts and deeds before the examination of her associates, and even in the hearing of her attendants, offered ample advantage to anyone who might wish to collect such materials

since her death—when no injury can be done by their repetition—for any fair and unprejudiced memoir.

The good attributes in the list will be found to preponderate largely over the evil ones; and on examination it will be evident that, while her excellencies were inherent in her nature, most of her defects had been fostered by, and were almost inevitable consequences of, her peculiar education and subsequent career.

Religion was the most remarkable and striking quality of her mind; and in the deep sense of its truth she was unostentatious as she was sincere. Points of faith were considered by her too serious for casual discussion, or for an introduction among lighter themes; and as no friendship can be permanent which is not based on a similitude of religious feelings between the parties, it is a valuable fact that all her favourite friends, and both her husbands, were known to be remarkable for their devotional feelings.

Her religious ideas were in strict accordance with the purest Christianity; they were well defined, and founded on much reflection and study of holy writ, strengthened by a lively faith in that mercy promised to those who act to the best of their power; they were aided too by prayer, and a feeling of universal toleration and charity towards every created being.

At all times her mind was fully prepared for dissolution, which she frequently expected, often speaking of death without fear or repugnance; and the calm of her last hours, brightened by a confidence in immortality, and sullied by no fear, was a pattern how a Christian should await the inevitable summons "with meekness, having a good conscience."

Her daily exercises of solitary devotion and meditation were long and never omitted. The minute book of prayer and meditations of Queen Catharine Parr was always carried about her person. In these beautiful little effusions the passages all bear strong affinity to her own position, in appeals for escape from its dangers and temptations.

A casual omission of these daily duties was considered by her so reprehensible, that she had almost a superstitious fear that merited misfortune would follow such negligence; as may be seen from the following fact, well known to her family and attendants:—

The first occasion on which she was to take her place as a peeress in the gallery of the House of Lords (at the opening of the houses of parliament) was an event to which she attached rather a nervous importance, and great care was taken about all the arrangements. Just as her toilette was completed, the carriage was announced, and she hastened downstairs, fearful of losing any part of the ceremony she

wished to witness. On reaching the carriage, however, a sudden change in her aspect was observed by the persons assisting her; and instantly withdrawing from the step, she dismissed the carriage, re-entered the house, and announced her intention of relinquishing her attendance at the House of Lords on that occasion! Her friends remonstrated against this caprice, but she was inaccessible to any argument; and, retiring to her own room, she dismissed her attendants, and passed the remainder of the morning alone.

The cause of this apparent whim was, that in the excitement and hurry of preparation, her customary devotions had been omitted, nor once recollected until she had passed the threshold. Struck with the negligence committed, and always swayed by the strong impulse of the moment, she resolved to sacrifice the intended gratification of her vanity as an atonement for the omission it had caused. In reverting to this fact, she is said to have remarked, "I was struck with shame and repentance at my vanity, and my spirits never felt so light and satisfied as when I cast aside the rich dress which had nearly caused a neglect of my daily duty of gratitude: the sacrifice of that hour was well repaid!"

Her Charity is too well known to require comment, unless it be to correct the illiberal construction attached sometimes to her kind deeds by the misin-



formed; namely that they sprung from a wish for display. It will be seen in the course of this work what strict injunctions all the household received, to abstain from communications respecting either the charities or festivities; that the duchess often went personally, in a plain dress and on foot, to avoid unnecessarily exposing the distress of others; and when, during her summer excursions, she received applications for pecuniary assistance, the recipients state that, in sending some donation in reply to their applications, the accompanying note never introduced her name, but commenced with, "The lady staying at so-and-so, having received an application, has the pleasure of sending," &c., &c. But independent of the almost impossibility of a woman in her high station doing anything without its being known, it should be recollected that her personal appearance was familiar to the public so many years in her professional career, that recognition awaited her at every turn.

One of her secret charitable deeds, which failed of much of its intended effect in consequence of her not consulting anyone, will prove the absence of display. Some years ago, when the distresses of the unfortunate Irish peasantry had reached an unusual height, so that universal famine threatened the land, there were numerous subscriptions, concerts, balls, and other charities, set on foot throughout England, with

the hope of affording the famishing people permanent relief. Mrs. Coutts gave a liberal donation to the general fund ; but her compassion was so excited by the pictures daily given of their distress by the papers, that she resolved on the somewhat romantic charity of *fitting out a ship entirely by herself, freighted with flour, provisions, blankets, raiment ; in fact, whatever was likely to be most beneficial to the sufferers ; and to send the cargo to the committee in Ireland, without allowing them to learn the name of the donor !* The expense, of course, was enormous—but could not have been better bestowed, although, unfortunately for the afflicted people, it might have been better managed ! By a mistake arising out of the secrecy observed, and the want of arrangement by a person accustomed to business, this noble donation all went to a branch committee, instead of the general one ; so that, in place of an equal distribution with the rest, the former naturally retained it for relieving their own particular district ; consequently, a small portion of the inhabitants revelled in profusion and (to them) luxury hitherto unknown, while the rest of the sufferers had not one day's want and misery alleviated by her munificent charity.

A strong principle of Truth pervaded the duchess's conduct, and, from matters of consequence to the most trivial circumstance, an implicit reliance might be placed on her word. In referring to her early

days, the degradations enforced by extreme poverty were constantly detailed, without reserve or affectation; and her subsequent mortifications, instead of being concealed, with the false pride of a vulgar mind, were candidly described as having caused her much sorrow, together with her disappointment at unkindness from persons whom gratitude ought to have instigated to an opposite line of conduct. She was very fond of her profession, and generally introduced a reference to it, without effort, into her conversation; but instead of the habitual practice of retired actors describing themselves as having been always *Romeos* and *Richards*, or *Lady Macbeths* and *Juliets*, the duchess used to say, "When I was a poor girl, glad to play any part they gave me for thirty shillings a week," &c.

The duchess had the misfortune of possessing one of the most hasty and violent tempers which can be conceived; and of course the excitement of anger led her to consider the most trifling word or deed as highly offensive, and requiring her utmost resentment,—a feeling which was fostered by the mischief-loving propensity of the lower order, who, in the shape of nurses, workwomen, and other attendants, had unfortunately full opportunity of making up histories against whoever had at the moment offended her. She never doubted the truth of these cringing people, therefore all their stories obtained credence;

but not an instance exists in which, without authority, her anger ever intentionally stated what was not truth; the facts themselves she would dwell upon, with a magnifying power, until she excited her anger to the greatest excess against the offender, whose lightest acts were then remembered disadvantageously. Like all passionate persons, she would censure at one time what would have been overlooked at another: but the only offence which dwelt in her memory was any attempt of individuals to rectify the matter in dispute at the expense of truth; this she would remember against them, and quote when they little suspected it. Persons who knew her but slightly would sometimes, for the sake of momentary favour, when she was angry, agree with all the violent speeches she uttered, and bear witness of some deeper misdeed “against their neighbour” who was absent. Those who were better acquainted with her disposition remained silent, or advanced some palliative remark, well knowing that when displeasure had exhausted itself in words she was very likely to remark, “I think so-and-so need not have told that matter to make me more angry!”

A great dislike of mystery, or any species of concealment, led her to bestow confidence on a variety of persons not always worthy of the trust; hence her actions and family affairs came into notice under distorted forms. Any remonstrance from her friends

on this want of caution was always answered by— “I am quite indifferent as to what is said of me; I have nothing evil to conceal, therefore they are welcome to abuse one who is too old to care now who ridicules her.”

In naming Generosity, it is not in allusion to the liberality with which she dispensed money around, nor to the profusion of expenditure attendant on all her actions; for however enlarged these views might be, there was perhaps a recklessness of the value of money, which is frequently seen among those who unexpectedly attain a great command of its power. But she possessed numerous letters from Mr. Coutts, in which he has commanded her, under pain of his displeasure, not to plead to him in the cause of his family, who (in his opinion) had spoken and acted unkindly respecting her, after the marriage; and conjuring his “blessed Harriot,” by very forcible terms, not to share with them any part of the wealth after his decease which would be the cause of animosity towards her. Yet she had the generosity to persevere in pleading their cause, until she procured his forgiveness for the parties.

Although no notice was taken of her for some time after the loss of her only friend, who left her the whole of a property which he knew she would not misuse, she from that time allowed among his three daughters nearly £30,000 per annum, until 1832,

when the eldest dying, the sum was reduced to about £26,000 per annum.

In 1836, a gentleman who knew her and Mr. Coutts, and his daughters, met the duchess at the bank in the Strand during one of the periodical settlements there, and saw, among other papers handed to his friend, an account of money which she had given to Mr. Coutts's family since his demise in 1822. It amounted to upwards of £380,000 in the fourteen years, the interest of which he said for one year would be nearly £12,000, and he further calculated that the compound interest, had the money been left to accumulate, would have yielded upwards of £20,000 a year, in addition to her income.

This distribution of the fortune of Mr. Coutts among his children was but pure justice; because, had she not been in existence, probably their father would have assigned it in a similar manner. But when we consider a high-spirited woman, having an idea that she had not been kindly treated, and possessing absolute power to withhold all from those who were no relations of her own, surely the forgiveness of what she considered unkindness, and this unforced liberality, will make out the assertion of her natural generosity—for it amounted to more than *justice*.

In Cheerfulness, under almost every circumstance, she was truly enviable. Ill health never

subdued her spirits; and when three or four physicians assembled in her room during the last illness at Brighton, peals of laughter, it is said, were often heard within it, from some merry story or quaint idea with which the patient greeted them, instead of querulous complainings. She used often to relate that the first phrase Mr. Coutts overheard her say was, "*I never lose my spirits!*" and his first gift was the bracelet she ever wore, bearing, in old English characters, that motto; than which there never was one more appropriate.

This flow of cheerfulness did not require the excitement of numerous auditors, who generally are necessary for the inspiration of witty conversation; but with only two or three young persons to dine with her, or even *tête-à-tête* in a carriage, the most exhausting and trying of social positions, the same exertion was made to entertain and interest. Nothing, save terror, had power to subdue her joyous spirit; but she suffered from the greatest excess of nervous fear; so that at times even the closing of a door would cause excessive alarm, and deprive her auditors of a story just at its point.

Her Wit is so generally known that it is almost needless to name it. Unstudied and prompt, it flowed easily into conversation, without the strained effort of a constant punster; and with the most rapid perception of humour in others, she delighted



in the society of witty persons, generally gathering them round her end of the table. But their gaiety must be neither personal nor coarse; the vulgarity of quizzing was banished, and a freedom of speech never attempted.

The true spirit of wit, either in conversation or writing, was never better appreciated and understood by anyone. The green-room spirit of anecdote naturally brings forward the latent brilliancy of professional persons, who also may be supposed to catch in a degree the sparkling style of dialogue which is their daily occupation. They all attain a clear and pointed delivery; hence the *repartees* of actors always *tell* well when they utter them, however ill they may be *told* afterwards.

In addition to these advantages derived from her profession, Miss Mellon had that magic gift, a sweet, clear, elegant tone of voice, which imparted grace and interest to all she uttered; it is, therefore, to be feared, the record of a few of her witty sayings in the progress of this work will give but a faint idea of their effect as they came from herself.

In that best of social qualities, *consideration for others*, it was scarcely possible to excel the duchess, to the latest period of her existence. No degree of indisposition or occupation on her part ever caused forgetfulness of the wishes, comfort, or amusement of her circle; their different tastes were ascertained



and remembered, so that the gratification of them might be complete; and no sacrifice of such tastes was ever required for her own convenience.

There are many amiably disposed persons, possessing both the power and the inclination to oblige others, *provided they think of it*; but, from a deficiency of such thoughtfulness, their kindly disposition is negative in its effect, or the benefits fall only on the importunate, who (being also the most unfeeling) are always the least deserving.

The duchess required no excitement to be kind, for, in addition to both power and inclination to oblige, she had a thoughtful attention for the absent, and a remembrance of their wishes and interests, even during her indisposition, which is delightful as it is rare.

She felt, however, that her nature did not require prompting in order to confer benefits; therefore no course was so likely to impede her favourable intentions as any application from the party requiring aid—or their making interest among her circle, as though their cause required influence beyond its own merits. In exemplification of her “feeling for another’s woe,” we make brief reference to the incident of the day on which she had invited some hundreds of persons to a *déjeuner* (in the Isle of Wight), and as Gunter did not come down from town the whole arrangements (about which she was

always so particular) depended on the presence and direction of the Swiss steward, Tournier. But, on the road to the Hawking-field, the duchess heard that some exiled Spanish lady had just died at Gosport, of the scarlet fever, leaving her sister in great affliction. Instantly she drove home again, and ordered Tournier to desist from his inspection, leaving the *déjeuner* to take its chance, while he went to offer the mourner any aid which might be serviceable at the moment. Someone remonstrated that the infection might be brought to her house—that everything would go wrong during Tournier's absence—and that she had better send a stranger. But all regard for the fête was lost in consideration that the poor foreigner would be most comforted by sympathy conveyed in a foreign voice, and Tournier was sent accordingly. This story was related by the Princess of Beira, sister of the deceased; and at the time it quite rang through the Isle of Wight.

The daily instances of this considerate feeling can be testified from personal experience by all who knew her intimately.

If it be urged that under the excitement of anger this sentiment was sometimes forgotten, it must be recollected, that very passionate characters do their real feelings injustice during their anger, by their forcible expression conveying much more than they intend. According to the proverb, “the angry

man that is dumb thinks worse than he speaks ; but the angry man who will chide, speaks worse than he thinks." No justification is here offered for these outpourings of her anger, which were sometimes so disproportionate to their provocation ; but a palliation may be urged in stating their transient duration, and her unlimited kindness of thought and action respecting those who avoided giving offence.

The warmth of her affection was continually evinced towards those to whom she felt herself attached. In the instance of her benefactor, Mr. Coutts, it amounted to such a romantic excess, even for his memory, that at first strangers would feel inclined to doubt its reality, until time imparted a knowledge of her enthusiastic character, and the strong impulses by which it was swayed. Her gratitude to him never missed opportunities of proving itself to his descendants, and nothing could exceed the constant study of their wishes and pleasure. Not content with merely making an occasional valuable present, whose cost was nothing from her splendid means, there was a continual thought and question as to what they could possibly like, and perhaps a dozen messages were sent during the day, with various elegant costly trifles she had fancied for the younger members of the family, thus proving they were constantly in her recollection.

In confidential intercourse, the name of Mr. Coutts was continually on her lips, his virtues magnified by the exaggerating power of affection, his statue the only ornament of her state room, his portrait decorating her favourite boudoir. The pillow on which he died was always placed in her carriage while travelling, as she never slept on any other; and the same feeling "strong in death" showed itself in her last desire, on finding the approach of her own dissolution, that she might be "removed to die in the room where Tom Coutts had died."

Among the failings of her character, the principal, as before stated, was being excessively prone to anger. At times, the veriest trifle would cause such displeasure that all dreaded where it might chance to fall; and under this excitement nothing that could be said or done at the moment would subdue it. But a hasty temper depends so much on the actual state of the nervous system, that an extra shade of good or bad health for the day will turn the balance of the mood. Mrs. Entwisle, her mother, was an exceedingly violent woman; and and this is a defect in parents which their offspring are less apt to take warning from than to copy. The doting fondness of Mr. Coutts could see no defect in his idolized wife; and her subsequent accession of wealth brought an undue submission to her will

from interested persons,—all of which tended to foster this prevailing defect of her nature. With the forgiving quality of all hasty tempers, if her anger was easily excited, it was generally but short-lived ; and, except when her flagging resolutions of enmity were bound up again by a *vow* (which was always repented), her displeasure would quickly clear away of itself, and its object meet a doubly kind reception.

She had been too long accustomed to command not to be extremely wilful ; and nothing turned her determination from a point on which she fixed it, except her own altered resolution.

Many persons include fickleness among her defects. Perhaps there are scarcely any dispositions free from it, a love of novelty being the besetting and often unknown sin of human nature ; but it is not just to affix it particularly to one who never forgot an old or humble friend, and who not only enjoyed a reference to “*auld lang syne*,” but delighted in conferring acts of kindness on individuals whose families she had known in her early days.

Finally, if a degree of pride or hauteur belonged to her disposition, it must not excite wonder, considering her rapid elevation and the mixture of mortifications forced into her enjoyments in some few instances, against which a naturally high-spirited woman would rebel. These qualities were

never evinced towards those of inferior rank : no distinctions were made among the guests, beyond the observance of customary etiquette ; all received an equal degree of quiet attention ; and even the fastidious George the Fourth, when Prince Regent, remarked to Mr. Coutts, that “ his young wife was one of the best-bred women at her own table he ever knew.”

To those who knew her intimately we appeal for the truth of this summary, in ascribing to her piety, charity, truth, generosity, consideration for others, cheerfulness, attachment, and gratitude. And if a desire for impartiality enforces the enumeration of frequent bursts of anger, or a display of wilfulness, caprice, or hauteur, surely they are not unpardonable defects in one who met with over-indulgence in childhood, flattery in her profession, devotion to her will as a wife, and submissive adulation up to the close of her career.

## CHAPTER II.

Parents of the Duchess of St. Albans—Their early history—Her Mother's Family—Arrival of strolling players—"Romeo and Juliet" in a barn—Death of the Duchess's Grandfather—Removal to Cork—Death of her Grandmother—Her Mother's avocations—Joins the strolling players—Tour in North Wales—Returns to Cork—Puritanical lover—Arrival of Mr. Mellon—Particulars of his history—Love, courtship, and marriage—Alleged nobility—Reminiscence of childhood—Removal to London—Mr. Mellon embarks for India—Birth of Harriot—Death of Mr. Mellon at sea—Anecdotes of her Mother—Her violence of temper—Treatment of Harriot.

THE early history of the parents of the late Harriot, Duchess of St. Albans, must be now so totally lost in the great interval of time, and the mystery affected by them, that there would be scarcely any possibility of retracing it from living authority, even if it were a matter of sufficient interest to render such research desirable. A brief outline, however, such as is customary in sketching the early scenes



of a memoir, can be given from the narration of the duchess herself, who had so grateful a sense of her own fortunate career, that she loved perpetually to contrast it with the poverty and lowliness of her original station.

These details were unaffectedly given to all ranks who were acquainted with her ; and she dwelt with a force almost like exaggeration on the early poverty and struggles of her family. Numbers of her acquaintance, therefore, will recognize, in the succeeding sketch of the late Mrs. Entwisle,\* the details which they have heard candidly related by her fortunate daughter. The duchess, who was a rigid adherent to truth, used to premise the history by saying she had no means of vouching for its accuracy, beyond having it from her mother, as she had never discovered another relation. But when it is considered that, while seated as a peeress at her own table, surrounded by noble, and frequently royal guests, she only assigned to her mother the birth of a peasant and the occupation of wardrobe-keeper to itinerant actors, the humility of the assertion must banish any question of its truth.

According, therefore, to Mrs. Entwisle's history of herself, as told to many persons now living, she was born near Cork, in 1752. Her parents were

\* Miss Mellon's mother married secondly a Mr. Entwisle, and the one name is used to avoid confusion.



labouring peasants, or, as they are termed in Ireland, *cottiers*, who lived by the cultivation of some land round their cabin. Their only daughter, Sarah, having been engaged in the active occupations of rustic life, received no education beyond the church prayers, taught orally by her mother, and the traditional songs and poetry for which the Irish are famed, and with which her memory teemed even to her latter days.

Judging from her industrious habits, but passionate character, as displayed afterwards, Mrs. Entwisle, as a girl, must have been one of those specimens of her countrywomen so frequently seen here, who destroy, in one minute of rage, the good character they have earned by a year's attention. Clever, shrewd, ambitious, artful, and charitable; warmly attached, yet passionate beyond control; good-natured, yet designing; friendly, yet abusive; she must have been one of the greatest anomalies of human nature. Loving her daughter to idolatry, she nevertheless took advantage of that daughter's generosity by false means. With but one steady aim through life, viz., the aggrandizement of her child (which she pursued without deviating for any obstacle), yet her cruelty towards poor Harriot was such as to endanger the girl's life many times, and even to inspire her with a dislike for existence under the harshness of her only relation. Strange to say,

this capricious violence never abated the filial affection of her daughter; from the time she had the power of evincing her attachment, until the period of her mother's decease, is one long history of benefits conferred, acts of affection, and dutiful forbearance, which could scarcely be paralleled for a more deserving parent.

Mrs. Entwisle had been gifted with extraordinary personal beauty in her youth, which was evident from the traces remaining in her advanced life, and described by numbers who recollect her earlier. Strong natural sense, and a woman's quick observation, enabled her to acquire a certain tone of manners from the actresses whom she attended; and many good judges of manners, who had a prejudice against Mrs. Entwisle from the histories of her violence, were agreeably surprised at the quiet, well-bred demeanour she could assume in society, when after events enabled her to associate with a grade superior to her own.

To resume the narrative given by herself: the event which she asserted had imparted a colouring to her fate (and consequently to that of her daughter) was the unexpected arrival in the village of some itinerant actors who had landed at Cork. The manager, whose name was Kena, well known formerly in Wales and Ireland, thought it would be advisable, while his thin horses were reposing, to

defray the expenses of the night's sojourn by performing a play in a barn; and one was borrowed from some charitable farmer, which a few theatrical properties rendered equally adapted for a theatre and a caravanserai. Milk, eggs, and potatoes being the primitive currency tendered and taken for the admissions, a measure of the latter entitled Sarah and her parents to front seats; and the sharp-witted Irish girl, who had hitherto only heard a neighbour read "Tracts on the Cruelty to Negro Slaves," or "The Sufferings of African Missionaries," first discovered that there existed other subjects for literature besides these miseries of human life by witnessing "Romeo and Juliet" performed in a barn!

It may be imagined how the mind of the poor girl was dazzled while witnessing this romance of our drama—reduced, of course, in its dialogue to the comprehension of the untutored audience. Her sympathy for the commonplace woes of missionaries and slaves was diminished in a fearful degree by the better-described sufferings of the fiction; and "the power of witnessing plays from morning till night" became her criterion of royal prerogative, like the plough-boy and his "swinging gate."

The next morning the players departed; but in consideration of a liberal supply of cabin dainties for their journey, Mr. Kena's wife proving herself

to be as good a manager as her husband, gave Sarah the well-worn copy of the play from which the free adaptation of the preceding evening had been taken.

Next to the happiness of witnessing the representation, was the power of hearing the drama read, and partially renewing its illusions; not the less enjoyed because half its phraseology was beyond her comprehension; on the contrary, as Mrs. Kena had said, it was the most beautiful book in the world, the difficulties consequently were voted to be sublimities. Sarah, therefore, revelled in the delight of listening to them during spare hours, and ultimately knew the play by heart.

At this time a melancholy interruption to her enjoyment occurred, in the death of her father, by one of those fevers which so often attack the labouring Irish after a bad harvest. A favourable season, or its reverse, makes a fearful difference in the husbandry of the poor, who possess no capital to lay up stores against such a contingency; and this is more lamentably evident in Ireland, where the people are too improvident to cast one thought beyond the present—perhaps fortunately for them, as their prospects are seldom of a nature to tempt anticipation.

The year's labour of Sarah's father had met no reward at the close of the season; disappointment aided the ravages of fever and the want of

proper sustenance, so that he expired in extreme wretchedness. After his decease it was found impossible to retain the plots of ground, or even the cabin, whose scanty furniture and implements when sold did not defray the funeral expenses. The widow and her daughter then removed into the town of Cork, the former gaining a scanty subsistence by going out by the day to work, while Sarah tried the monotonous drudgery of needlework at home. In the latter she was tolerably successful, having displayed great quickness in learning the way to execute some articles entrusted to her by an inferior mantua-maker, who was besides a milliner, dyer, haberdasher, and keeper of a miscellaneous shop of all-work.

This dispiriting life continued for some time without interruption, the humble pair rejoicing still that they could “keep a roof over their heads” (to use Mrs. Entwisle’s Irish idiom), which prevented the necessity of their going to service, an occupation for which Sarah’s independent temper rendered her particularly unsuitable. But the widow, always accustomed to country air and early hours, was too old for the change in their habits; therefore, the sedentary life, in their one close apartment of a dark house, had a gradual effect on her health. Sarah worked on still more assiduously, but her efforts to preserve her sinking parent were vain; and in 1776,

when in her twenty-fourth year, she found herself an orphan, destitute alike of friends and money, or occupation to procure it.

Under these sad circumstances her former employer, the mantua-maker, undertook to receive her as a shopwoman and assistant in the house ; diminishing her payment almost to nothing, but affording her at least a respectable home ; and as there seemed no better alternative, she gladly accepted the engagement.

The arrangement answered as well at least for the shopkeeper as it did for the orphan, who formed a useful assistant, besides possessing the personal advantages which milliners appear to seek in their young attendants, like blocks for exhibiting their goods. She was then just four-and-twenty, and must have been tall and remarkably well-formed, with a brunette countenance of great beauty.\*

Those who remember Mrs. Entwisle during her visits to London, when she was advanced in years, state that she retained many traces of considerable personal beauty ; the full, laughing, dark eyes, jet

\* The duchess, in describing her recollections regarding her mother's appearance when the latter was about thirty-five, used to say, "My mother had infinitely greater claims to being good-looking than myself; any personal advantages I might have possessed were derived from her; and, in addition, she had a fine oval face, and beautifully regular features, whereas, mine are too short, and the contour of my face too round for its length."

black hair, and remarkably fine teeth, which her daughter inherited, with an elegantly formed mouth (the feature which most quickly betrays vulgarity); and although a very large person, she had the rare advantage of a symmetrical arm and hand, on which she founded a pardonable degree of vanity. It is said also, that, like her daughter, she possessed the winning attraction of a low, sweet voice in her younger days; an unusual gift for one who had been brought up in the country, where toiling in the open air seems either to render the voice coarse, or to give an inveterate habit of speaking loudly. Perhaps poor Sarah found the necessity under her new taskmistress of modulating her voice to its most submissive tone; though her hasty temper was repressed only, and never wholly subdued throughout her life.

In return for her board and very scanty wages she was expected, after serving in the shop until it was closed, to labour most diligently at needlework, frequently to an advanced hour of the night, and it will not be supposed that her morning rest was allowed to be much prolonged.

Without any companion or source of amusement under the mortifications and tyranny inflicted by one who knew she could not retaliate, the poor girl's mind naturally reverted to her one beloved drama, which she mentally acted while engaged in needlework—"woman's pretty excuse for thinking," as



Sir Edward Bulwer gracefully terms our monotonous occupation.

She thought on the happy fate of an actress, compared with her own drudgery ; and as a comment on her fancy, she perceived Mrs. Kena, and one of the actresses she had first seen, strolling up the street, and laughing together as if life were all sunshine ! Their appearance decided her fate ; she quickly discovered their temporary abode, found their destination was Aberystwith, and offered to join the company.

Mr. Kena laughed heartily at the notion of a peasant girl fancying it was so easy to enact heroines ;\* but his wife having ascertained Sarah's present employment and degree of skill in feather-dressing, dyeing, cleaning, and new-fashioning robes, considered there would be great advantage in having

\* She never abandoned the idea, however, that she had a very fine tragic genius ; and as she had not an opportunity of showing it practically, it was displayed in criticism. She was constantly instructing her daughter how she ought to play such and such characters, and it was impossible to resist laughing at these exhibitions, several of which their visitors, still living, witnessed. The poor woman would not have been allowed to rant as the tragedy queen of the "deep pieces," in a booth at a country fair ! Yet she constantly reproached her daughter with stupidity in not acquiring the lessons she gave ; and, notwithstanding the absurdity of these scenes, her daughter always set an example of respect for her mother, by acquiescing gently, and promising amendment, though her quick sense of the ridiculous must have been often sorely tried.



such an accession. Accordingly, without naming her profession to the puritanical milliner, Mrs. Kena inquired the character of the young shopwoman, and finding the account of her industry and probity most satisfactory, resolved to add the employment of money-receiver at the door, to Sarah's other department of dresser and wardrobe keeper.

In a few days she left her first employer, to attend on "a lady going on a tour through Wales," as her migratory friend chose to be described. They travelled, indeed, through a great part of Wales and the adjoining English counties; their new assistant consoling herself that, as she was considered to have no genius for the stage, she enjoyed seeing the performances more than those who had to labour in the vocation. She was most careful and industrious respecting the dresses, which were "revived equal to new" under her skill; and as "money-taker," the Kenas vowed she was a treasure, for their receipts had never before been so honestly managed. The consequence of her great probity was, that the manager became too rich for further trouble; for it was his usual (and rather national) custom to work extremely hard while his circumstances were embarrassed;—then, just as he was becoming free from distress, he thought it was time for relaxation, and the company might be dismissed until his necessities assembled them again.

The excellent state of the treasury under Sarah's control made the unthinking Irishman long for another tour of idleness : he gave leave of absence to the troop ; and, in gratitude for the money-taker's attention to finance, paid her passage back again to her former abode ; where, having with a heavy heart stated that the lady had finished her travels in Wales, the milliner was too glad to regain her industrious, clever assistant, to ask many questions as to how she had been employed.

While accompanying her mistress to the Wesleyan meeting-house, the handsome Sarah had the ill-fortune to captivate the oldest, ugliest, and most thoroughly disagreeable of the whole congregation. He was in poor circumstances likewise ; or the forlorn young woman might, perhaps, have tied herself to misery to escape the drudgery of her employment ; but old, ugly, cross, and *poor* also, was too bad a catalogue for even a penniless sempstress ; she therefore refused her first lover.

This old man was a great favourite with the milliner, who considered him as one of the elect ; and two or three times in the week he came to read, pray, and expound for her and Miss Sarah's edification.

The young woman had been reared to great devotion ; in her subsequent life she was a pious woman, and made her daughter eminently so. Her

uncultivated sense of propriety, therefore, detected the irreverence of this man, turning from making her a soft speech to read the book which his indifference profaned; and in after years she often referred to her detestation of her first lover's hypocrisy. Her mistress taunted her respecting the refusal, and accused her of "having vain and high notions," which certainly formed a strong portion of her character; so that, between unkindness and persecution, her only relief was when she might work undisturbed in the shop.

Young, bright eyes, however, will wander, even from such double action as needlework and shop-keeping, to examine the neighbours in the opposite windows; and one day Sarah discovered a stranger seated in the drawing-room facing her shop—a young, handsome, dark man, and recently arrived, as the apartments had been that morning vacant.

In the course of shop-gossip the intelligence respecting a new comer was easily obtained; so, before the evening, the history of this gentleman, as far as he had chosen to give it, was universally known. He described himself as "*Lieutenant Mathew Mellon, of the Madras Native Infantry, who had come to Europe on sick leave, and was travelling through Ireland for change of air.*"

Who this self-styled Lieutenant Mathew Mellon really was will always remain a mystery. The

name, which sounds unreal, most probably was assumed only while travelling by some young Englishman seeking adventures in Ireland. If it had been a genuine name, surely some connexion of his would gladly have answered the anxious inquiries of the duchess, even supposing his immediate relations were deceased.

Mrs. Entwisle, who had all the reverence of her country for high rank, used to make the most extraordinary declarations confidentially respecting his being a nobleman !

During the preparation of this work, upwards of twenty strangers have forwarded to the publisher, from various parts of England, the information that she had solemnly assured them "My Harriot is the daughter of a lord." But as the nobleman's title could never be won from her, or from her late husband, Mr. Entwisle, it may have arisen from the love of grandeur inherent in the humbler order of the Irish, which actually prompts even the menials to take pride in the ancient descent of their masters, and to consider themselves immeasurably raised above others who only serve "Cromwellians," as they term the comparatively modern families of the time of Cromwell.

In the scoldings given to poor Harriot, which her mother's ungovernable temper could not repress even before strangers, she always concluded by

saying, "And *you* to do so, Harriot, with *such high blood* in your veins!"

The vain Irishwoman seems to have forgotten that, in proclaiming this grandeur, she was casting a slur on her own reputation; for, in her humble capacity as a theatrical-dresser, her auditors could not be expected to give her credit for a patent of nobility and a certificate of marriage also, although she laid claim to both, as will be seen.

The late duchess had the good taste and sense never to introduce this discussion when referring to her mother's history, but always spoke of Mr. Mellon as an officer without rank or fortune. During her mother's lifetime she always turned the conversation, or laughed away the noble boast, which the latter took every opportunity of making.

A gentleman who knew both in 1814, having accompanied them to a box at Drury Lane, Mrs. Entwisle said oracularly, "If my Harriot knew who she really was, this box would not be sufficient for her! Mr. Coutts is a very excellent man, but in point of birth he is not half good enough for Harriot." Her daughter laughingly replied, "I daresay, dear mother, I am a princess in disguise; but I am so well disguised that the king, my father, will have immense trouble to find me out!"

The account of the nobleman given by Mrs. Entwisle having been mentioned since her death to

her daughter, she replied that, for her poor mother's sake, she preferred believing the more humble, but more creditable, story of Mr. Mellon having been merely what he represented himself; but she had no means of ascertaining the truth, and she never could press it on her mother further than the latter might voluntarily relate.

The duchess had a singular reminiscence of her childhood (which has also been transmitted for these memoirs by several of her early friends), and to which many have heard her mother significantly refer. While Harriot Mellon was too young to walk a great distance, she remembered being carried in the evening to a large mansion which had a quantity of lights in its great hall and wide staircase; and from a bright room there came forth an old lady in a satin mantle—the unknown texture of which delighted the child while carried in the lady's arms. An old gentleman came in and likewise fondled her, letting her play with what she considered the “great button” on his coat, but which theatrical tinsel afterwards taught her was a star. After much feasting and wonder, she was carried home again a long way. She was taken there a second time, and the sharp little child knew her way through the house, and ran from her mother to the room of the “satin lady” and the “star gentleman.” “I never saw them afterwards,”

continued the duchess; "but since my mother's death, when I went as Mrs. Coutts to visit at \* \* \* Castle for the first time, *I knew the great staircase* up which I had been carried more than forty years previously, and I found my way unguided to the drawing-room!"

Mrs. Entwisle always insinuated that those grand people were the parents of Harriot's father. The duchess, with better sense, suggested that they were probably patrons of her mother's poor days, and there the matter rested; for she was better satisfied with the humble origin. Both are now immaterial, where no descendants remain.

Miss Mellon's suppression of the boast, and her mother's continual utterance of it, mark the distinction between their dispositions as strongly as an entire biography. The *pride* of the daughter felt deeply even an unmerited slight, and therefore she clung to the more reputable history; the *vanity* of the uncultivated Irishwoman to add importance to the character of her daughter actually sacrificed her own fame to these ill-judged vauntings!

To return to the history of the *soi-disant* Lieutenant Mellon and the Irish belle. His listless days were almost entirely passed at the open window of his sitting-room, opposite to which his good fortune—to banish the demon of ennui—had placed the handsome young shopwoman. Their acquaintance



by sight soon increased to a bow, when he threw open the window ; and this advanced to speaking terms whenever Sarah was sent out with a cap or a bonnet. Never had she been so respectfully addressed, or ever heard such beautiful language, except on the stage ; he was evidently the Romeo of her fate ; and after a very short acquaintance they became lovers, and arranged for a continuation of their acquaintance.

The interruption of their romance occurred through Sarah's former admirer, who eagerly gave information against her encouragement of the formidable rival. The strict shopkeeper instantly deprived her assistant of the office of basket-bearer, forbidding all speech with Mr. Mellon, and keeping her in the back room a prisoner. To add to the annoyance of this position, in a stolen conversation with Mr. Mellon, she learnt from him that the period of his residence in Ireland had expired, and having no means of his own independent of his commission, it was impossible to maintain more than himself in India ; and he resolved not to involve her in the misery of poverty in a distant land. He therefore expressed his determination to leave her in Ireland until regimental promotion enabled him to claim her, and with increased means ; to which prudent resolution he expected the attached girl would calmly acquiesce.



Calmness, however, was never one of her conspicuous virtues, and in the present instance her sorrow amounted almost to insanity, at the thought of his proposed departure, and her continuance with the severe task-mistress.

The alternative then proposed by Mr. Mellon was, that they should be privately married ; and as her former theatrical friends, the Kenas, were about to embark for England, she should accompany them to London, whither they were going in the hope of recruiting some extinguished stars ; and when he had sailed for Madras she was to remain in London, supporting herself by needlework, until he was enabled to send for her to join him in India. These arrangements seemed delightful to the country girl ; therefore, according to her own account, on Twelfth-day, 1777, she was married to Lieutenant Mathew Mellon.

The duchess, who was quite superior to any assumption in relating this history, used to say, “ Recollect, I am not telling you my own story, but merely giving you my poor mother’s words, according to her invariable assertions when we conversed on the matter ; which I, however, have no reason to doubt.”

The arrangements for accompanying the Kenas to London did not require long preparation ; and on arriving there they took lodgings beyond the

Bishop's Palace, Lambeth. Here they remained until the vessel in which Mr. Mellon was to sail had gone round to Portsmouth, and in March, 1777, he left her to proceed on his voyage—and she never saw him more.

In heavy sorrow, yet buoyed up with sanguine expectations for the future, when she was to be such a grand personage, the friendless bride having before Mr. Mellon's departure obtained an engagement as a sempstress, contrived to subsist with the greatest economy. Mrs. Kena, whose husband was much from home in some temporary capacity at one of the theatres, was her fellow-lodger and labourer; their only relaxation being an order of admission for the theatre, which, coming frequently, revived her former mania, and her knowledge of theatricals became more extended.

In the meantime, no letters came from Mr. Mellon, and the friends of the anxious wife used to visit the docks in order to inquire of the captains just arrived whether they brought any communication or intelligence for her. These inquiries were for some time vain, and at last they brought her word from an East India vessel that a Mr. Mellon had died of consumption during his passage between the Cape and Madras.

On the 11th of November, 1777, her two kind compatriots thought her misfortunes were increased

by the birth of her little girl. They did not guess how amply that child would repay all her maternal care.

Friends and foes all unite in saying that the late duchess was the most affectionate, attentive, and obedient daughter, to one of the most violent, capricious, and unmanageable of mothers that ever existed.

Unbounded love subsisted between them; and, notwithstanding that the furious temper of Mrs. Entwisle often endangered her child's life, yet that child's education, advancement, and success in the world, formed the sole objects to which her mother's strong faculties were directed. She always claimed for Harriot a degree of deference which she did not exact for herself; implying in every manner a right of superiority on the part of the little girl. If the latter escaped to enjoy a game of play with children of apparently her own rank, her mother, in a fit of violence, would drive her home, reproaching the degenerate taste of "one with such good blood;" and when the best provincial families began to notice and invite the clever, well-behaved little player to their houses, the gratified mother never attempted to intrude herself with the child, merely bringing her to the door, and calling again, or waiting in the hall, until she came away.

### CHAPTER III.

Her mother again joins the players—Marriage with Mr. Entwisle—His history—Visionary claims—Anecdote of Mrs. Siddons—Harriot sent to school—Anecdotes—Serious effects of her mother's violence—Mr. and Mrs. Entwisle join another company of comedians—The eccentric Thomas Bibby—Lodgings, salary, and circumstances—State of the drama at Ulverstone—Miss Mellon's character as a school-girl—Her mother's attention to her education—Miss Calvert and her school—Harriot's first appearance on the stage, as a mute—Her singing, dancing, and accomplishments—Early day-dreams—First appearance in character, as Little Pickle, Priscilla Tom-boy—Dressing for the stage—Juvenile characters—Improvement in her profession.

IN the spring of 1778, Mr. Kena having finished his engagement in one of the pantomimes, prepared to leave London with his wife; and as their former dresser and treasurer had no other friends, there needed but little persuasion to induce her to resume the occupation she had so faithfully fulfilled. Accordingly, they departed on a tour through the

northern counties, where Mr. Kena expected to collect some stray performers who might be leaving other companies. They went through the customary vicissitudes, sometimes joining the company of others, occasionally with one of a very inferior grade under Mr. Kena's direction; but in each change of fortune they were accompanied by their industrious assistant, with her little baby; and her exertions in taking in dressmaking, &c., greatly aided their common fund.

While they were in Lancashire their orchestra was much assisted by the skill of a young musician named Entwisle, who, though quite a lad, exhibited great talent and proficiency on the violin. He was the son of a very respectable person, who occasionally played the organ at Wigan, and who was likewise connected with the cotton manufacture of Bolton. The elder Mr. Entwisle had a numerous family, and not any means of establishing them in trade; therefore his son Thomas resolved to become a professional musician, for which his talent well qualified him.

While engaged in Mr. Kena's orchestra he became attached to the handsome widow, Mrs. Mellon, to whom he was married in 1782. That he had not attained years of discretion at that time appears from his own account of the matter, as written to a

friend,—“At eighteen years of age I was wedded to Mrs. Entwisle.” \*

Mrs. Entwisle was considerably older than her husband ; and, for some years, either her beauty or her violence, maintained the most unbounded influence over him ; but time, which alters all things, did not leave her dominion unshaken.

He was a very simple man, respectable in his appearance, and had received a tolerably good, plain education for his class of life ; but his tastes were for idle society, of habits and manners beneath himself ; consequently, not at all in accordance with the grand projects which his newly-married partner had already formed for her daughter’s rise in the world ! To little Harriot Mellon he was greatly attached ; and his personal comfort was frequently sacrificed (perhaps at her mother’s instigation) in order that the child might have the benefit of early education, which they always managed.

At first, while they were too poor to hire any conveyance during their tours, Mr. and Mrs. Entwisle used to carry Harriot and his celebrated Cremona

\* On the back of their certificate of marriage, which was in the possession of the duchess, there was written in another hand—“At this time little Harriot was not quite two years old.” But this was erroneous, and must have been done afterwards, in order to make their young charge appear the greater wonder in acting so early, for she was two years and a half older than would seem by this account.

violin alternately ; and afterwards, when their means were increased so as to allow of payment for one of the group to be conveyed from one town to another, it was always Harriot who was thus sent, and wrapped up in some rather finer habiliments than the pedestrian pair.

That she repaid their affection a thousand-fold, throughout their lives, will be hereafter seen. Even after her marriage with Mr. Coutts, and subsequent to her mother's death, she had this man to live in the house with her benefactor, although the low associates and the degraded habits of Mr. Entwisle used to disgust and sometimes alarm her husband, who was accustomed to refined society.

All unassuming and simple as Mr. Entwisle was, it would even seem there was a shade of romance attached to his history also, his genealogy having been closely examined since his demise, the professional skill of a lawyer having been attracted towards the search. After the decease of Mr. Entwisle, in 1819, some persons "learned in the law" wrote to inform Mrs. Coutts that she might establish through her stepfather's name a very good claim to a large estate in Lancashire, if she would commence proceedings against the present holders, and assuring her it was worth while to pay even £10,000 with the almost certainty of obtaining nearly £10,000 per annum at the close of the litigation ! Mrs.



Coutts, however, had a different opinion as to the result, suspecting that after the expenditure of the £10,000 in expenses she would only be enabled to exclaim, with the Irish baronet—"What a fine estate I might have, only that the right owners keep possession of it."

The claim, indeed, seems so thoroughly visionary that it is merely mentioned here in order to give the authority for Mr. Entwisle's romance, which was sent to Mrs. Coutts from the unromantic precincts of the attorney's office, after their investigation.

According to this account there had been, about four generations back, a Sir Fleetwood Haversham, who, with his wife, Lady Betty Haversham, lived at a very fine place in Lancashire, in great splendour. Unfortunately, Sir Fleetwood's gambling propensities were unbounded; and at the races in his neighbouring county, his face and his ill-luck were equally well known. Year after year was timber sold; then fields; then the park: until, through his infatuation for the turf, he wasted the entire estate, having no son on whom it could have been entailed. At last, the whole property, and even the family mansion, passed into other hands. Sir Fleetwood himself is said to have died a prisoner for debt, and his wife did not long survive him. But on her death-bed she sent for her former housekeeper (who had retired from service), beseeching this humble friend not to forsake

the young Miss Haversham, who would soon be left an orphan, without friend or fortune, but to bring the child up in the best way her means would admit.

The housekeeper, who, on retiring from service, had established herself as a pastrycook, took the little orphan girl under her charge when Lady Betty Haversham died, and brought her up to the mysteries of pastry. In time she became a belle, and captivated the heart of a German musician named Entwisle, who had come over to England with George the Second's band. He married the dowerless girl, and they had a numerous family. Most of the sons were musical; and Thomas, born in 1764, was a remarkably fine violin player. This was the individual who married Mrs. Mellon, and who survived all his family.

On these ill-founded premises his step-daughter had been advised to go to law for the recovery of an estate which, even by the showing of the advisers, had been legally sold by its wasteful owner, some generations back. Fortunately, the good judgment of her own professional advisers coincided with her opinion of the affair, which no one else has had the speculative folly to agitate.\*

\* The orphan daughter of Sir Fleetwood Haversham bestowed on one of her own daughters the now extinct family name: a sister of Mrs. Mellon's husband bearing the name of *Fleetwood Haversham Entwisle*. This is mentioned by one who had seen her singular signature, without knowing its derivation.

Soon after the marriage of Mr. and Mrs. Entwisle, the rambling Mr. Kena brought his party back to Wales, where he resolved, if possible, to make enough money to enable him to indulge in another of his idle fits, and to disband the company for a time.

The youthful Mrs. Siddons was then the universal theme of the good people in Wales, her family having lived so much there; and her marriage with Mr. Siddons was arranged at Brecon against the consent of her parents.

The play-goers of Brecon related a story respecting the mother of Mrs. Siddons, which Mrs. Entwisle used to repeat in after years to her daughter, as a precedent for maternal violence, and an excuse for her own committal of any act which had been thought right by so celebrated an individual as the "mother of all the Kembles."

Mrs. Roger Kemble (mother of Mrs. Siddons) was particularly averse to the attachment between her clever daughter at eighteen and the handsome but penniless actor, Mr. Siddons, who had for some time belonged to Mr. Kemble's company. She expressed her disapprobation in no measured terms; and made her husband also issue his fiat against the ill-starred lovers.

Mr. Siddons was naturally irritated against the manageress; therefore, being a popular favourite

with the Brecon audience, he ventured on a strange experiment—viz., he wrote a comic song, describing the course of his true love, and its interruption through maternal mercenary views; and this he had the bad taste to sing in one of his characters on the stage.

The song raised a hearty laugh against the unpopular lady, whose hasty temper was no secret in the small town of Brecon; and the effusion was tumultuously encored.

At its conclusion, when the author-singer was making his exit, Mrs. Kemble advanced to the wing so as to be seen from the house, and, taking the law in her own hands, she inflicted such summary punishment on the facetious lover that his reappearance that night was impossible, and another Thespian had to step into the character without even “a short notice.”

Lady Eleanor Butler, who knew the parties, used to wind up this anecdote with the speech of Mr. Roger Kemble, after his daughter's marriage; it has been ascribed to his father, but it is given here as related by the ladies of Llangollen. Mr. R. Kemble had always a dislike to his daughter marrying an actor; and before their acquaintance with Mr. Siddons he told her that if she ever did so it would make him discard her for ever. Notwithstanding this heavy paternal threat, she took the

imprudent step of marrying one whose handsome appearance was his sole recommendation, as he had not the least talent for his profession.

When the penitent daughter knelt for pardon after the marriage, her father inquired, did she remember his threat of what he would do if she married an actor? She replied in the affirmative, but trusted to his mercy. Her father then raised her, and said, "I may forgive you without breaking my word; for you certainly have *not* married 'an actor,' whatever the gentleman himself may think is his vocation."

For the short time Mr. Kena continued with his company in the North Wales circuit, Mr. Entwisle was the only performer in the orchestra, the funds having rather diminished since Mrs. Entwisle had given up the treasurership, her time being wholly occupied in the care of her infant Harriot.

It must be admitted that, with all her passionate habits, she was desirous of bringing up her little daughter with good principles, although she had rather a violent method of instilling them, as the following story will prove. When Harriot Mellon was about four years old, and as full of fun as possible, she was sent to a day-school for little creatures like herself, kept by an aged dame, whom they denominated their "granny." Harriot was always playing tricks on her schoolfellows, hiding their

bonnets, cloaks, satchels, &c., and one of them in retaliation played on her a trick which had nearly produced fatal consequences. A little girl's primer was missing when she wanted to say her letters from it—(it afterwards appeared that one of the scholars, by her own confession, had in jest put it into Harriot Mellon's school-bag to cause trouble). The "granny" ordered a general examination of property, and at the top of Harriot's bag was the unlucky primer discovered. In vain the poor child protested she knew nothing of its being there; she was loaded with opprobrium, having the extra accusation of falsehood joined to the petty larceny.

She was sent home to her mother, guarded by some other children, with an account of her misdemeanour upon the circumstantial evidence. Mrs. Entwisle was engaged in making up some clothes, and being too busy to leave off, she told the children they might go back and inform the "granny" that Harriot should be *properly punished before long*. The busy little fry dropt their curtsies and set off, rather frightened at Mrs. Entwisle's flashing eyes, which seemed capable of scorching the work she was finishing. Harriot was left alone with her mother, in too great terror to speak, to cry, or to move. Mrs. Entwisle, however, without comment continued her employment, which, having finished, she folded up as calmly as if nothing were to ensue. She

then took Harriot in her arms, without question or allowing her to speak, to the courtyard and placed her under a pump; here she held the child and inundated her with water, keeping it pouring over her long after she had become through terror insensible. In this state she threw the child into a dark shed and closed the door, allowing her to remain a considerable time without notice. So long a period elapsed without Harriot's voice being heard that the passionate woman became alarmed for the results of her anger, and opened the door of the shed; there in a heap on the ground lay the little creature insensible, just as she had been thrown in, her clothes streaming and her face the hue of death.

Mrs. Entwisle concluded she had murdered her only darling, and the wild cries of horror which she raised alarmed the neighbourhood. The child was undressed by some humane persons, placed in a warm bed, and after some time recovered; but she was afraid to open her eyes, for Mrs. Entwisle was in such a passion of grief at her own barbarity, that the still confused child thought it was continued anger against her and she had better lie still.

At length, hearing her mother threaten to kill herself, she ventured to speak, and the revulsion of feeling nearly caused the fitful Irishwoman to smother by her embraces the partially recovered treasure.



It was some time before poor Harriot was well enough to revisit school, and when she did no more tricks were played upon her.

Mr. Entwisle in the first year of their marriage being obliged (through Mr. Kena's idleness) to seek another engagement, it was considered that Lancashire, his native county, would afford the best prospect. Accordingly, having packed up his famous Cremona, they set out, carrying Harriot alternately, and near Preston they encountered the Lancashire strolling manager, Bibby, who being then in want of a musician was very glad to engage so excellent a performer.

In the early part of the summer of 1783 Mr. and Mrs. Entwisle, with Harriot Mellon, then in her sixth year, arrived at Ulverstone, in Lancashire, being attached to the dramatic company under the management of the eccentric Thomas Bibby. Mr. Entwisle was leader of their slender orchestra, and his wife, besides making the dresses, used to take characters in processions, &c.

That odd creature, Thomas Bibby, who still lives in the memories of some of the oldest inhabitants that attended the drama, had been brought up as a tailor, at Bouth, near Ulverstone, but he soon turned itinerant manager, and used to stroll about with his company through all the towns in the north-eastern counties, so as to revisit each town after an interval

of two years. On the first occasion of the Entwises going to Ulverstone they lodged in the house of a person named Laycock, a Lancashire “clogger,” or maker of a species of *sabot* much used there. The daughter of this person is still living. That his charge for rent could not have been very great may be inferred from the circumstance that the professional exertions of Mr. and Mrs. Entwisle only procured a joint salary of seventeen shillings and sixpence per week. This sum was augmented by the former taking musical pupils in humble life; and his wife, with her remarkable industry, aided their means by dyeing silks, cleaning feathers, lace, and exercising other “fine arts” acquired under her first patroness, the provincial milliner and dyer.

The above-named salary, miserable as it now seems, must have been quite in proportion with the receipts of the theatre. The price of admission to the pit was one shilling; to the gallery, sixpence, and as for boxes, they were a luxury not then introduced to the dramatic patrons at Ulverstone.

Notwithstanding their slender means, however, Mrs. Entwisle devoted a portion of them to sending her little Harriot to a day-school, kept by Miss Calvert, a most respectable, clever, and extremely pious person, some of whose pupils now living recollect “the black-eyed child of the players,” who

was a great pet in the school, of which she was one of the juniors.

In the generality of dramatic biographies the children are represented as having possessed a studious turn, and to have given early indications of their future success by wondrous outbursts of theatrical inspiration. Alas, for poor Harriot Mellon ! Instead of preccious histrionic powers and habits of study, her former schoolfellows bear testimony that she was the most laughter-loving, playful, and thoroughly idle little truant that ever disliked a school book. She was perpetually bringing herself and friends into trouble by imparting to them her merry fancies during school hours, which, after the forbidden whisper, were sure to cause the betraying laugh, and she was continually punished by extra lessons and kept in school after the other pupils had departed.

She possessed an extraordinary facility of retaining for a time what she had but slightly examined, a dangerous gift in childhood, inducing the student to skim over a variety of useful matter, which is afterwards as lightly forgotten as it was lightly acquired.

As Harriot Mellon knew she could learn a lesson by reading it through twice, she never thought of looking into a school-book at home ; and Mrs. Entwisle believed her darling child was working quite hard enough by staying in school four or five

hours daily. So that, as she used to relate, her custom was to enter the schoolroom with a face of importance, as though conscious of being well prepared with her learning; and then, after making a knot of little creatures giggle by her nonsense, she would creep behind the open door, where, reading her lesson, she could defy the world and its cares.

The casualty which rendered this system frequently abortive was, when some of the tittering group became outrageous in their mirth. In this case the ringleader was always known without any questioning, and the awful and particularly inconvenient result was, "Miss Mellon, come directly and say your lesson."

This was more easily ordered than executed by one who had never thought of the hated book since the preceding day, so that the poor little culprit was put in the corner and daily detained after school hours.

When Mrs. Entwisle discovered "her Harriot" was not allowed to come away with the others her anger knew no bounds. Down she would go and tell the schoolmistress, on her regal throne, that "she knew Harriot was not near so stupid as other children, who were allowed to go home in proper time, therefore it was envy that caused her being kept after school hours, in order to disgust her with too much learning; and if her daughter might not

leave school at the same time the others came away she should be removed altogether ! ”

Miss Calvert was a person of quiet, gentle manners, and not wishing to encounter the *energy* of Mrs. Entwisle's remonstrances, she contented herself with imposing an extra lesson, which, to the quick little child, was no punishment ; so that half the time she was put in the corner to study, she was making signs and talking by her fingers to her companions, who, to Miss Calvert's great surprise, were “ still idling, though that chattering Harriot Mellon was put in the corner ! ”

At Ulverstone there seems to have existed a very strong and precocious notion of the “ rights of woman ; ” for at the little girls' schools there, it was customary to “ bar out for a holiday,” a practice confined to boys' schools elsewhere.

Harriot Mellon, though sometimes backward in her lessons, never could be reproached for neglecting a holiday. She was a frequent ringleader in these insurrections, collecting all the girls (most of them older than herself), and dragging tables and forms against the door which she had locked ; then, speaking through the key-hole, she would demand a holiday, with immunity from punishment for the whole band. And such was the lax discipline of those days, that these little atoms dictated to their instructors on the two points, and always succeeded.

The rigid governess frequently prefers the lively child ; and out of school hours Miss Calvert liked to have Harriot with her, to whom she taught quantities of poetry orally ; and, strange to say, she was Miss Calvert's favourite companion at church, where she delighted the good teacher by repeating her responses correctly, and behaving with the most steady attention ; showing thus early, perhaps, what a creature of impulse she was destined to become.

The Entwistles at that time were so poor that they were unable to pay the full amount even of the trifling stipend of the school ; but the kind mistress remitted a portion of it rather than distress them or lose the care of their pretty, giddy, affectionate child. It was this early friend that treasured up one of her favourite's remarks, and a relation of hers wrote it to Miss Mellon in after days. It is about as brilliant as the epitaph on the "duck which Samuel Johnson trod on." It is as follows :—Miss Calvert one day endeavouring to check the invincible love of chattering which was inherent in her pupil, said, "Oh ! Harriot, does your tongue never lie ?" And her companion, who knew thoroughly she meant "lie quiet," slyly answered, "No, ma'am, it never *lies*, that is so naughty !"

One great source of Harriot Mellon's influence over her fellow-pupils was, the wonderful fact that

she had actually been a performer in a play with Manager Bibby's actors. The character, to be sure, was not a very arduous one, being that of one of four little mourners ranged round Juliet's bier. But then, as the smallest and prettiest of the little girls, she was placed in front nearest to the lamps, and was consequently the *prima donna* of the juvenile mutes; and she used to look forward to the giving out of that particular play (and the consequent white frock with its broad, black sash) as an event exceeding all others in importance. The future comic actress, therefore, decidedly came out first in tragedy.

Although too young to appear in any character, except such as one of the little princes in the Tower, she already could recite with considerable fluency, and she likewise could sing very prettily to the accompaniment of the violin. Those who remember her singing thus, state that she was always placed standing on a table, so that her sweet little silvery voice might be on a level with her audience.\* Mr.

\* It is said that the sweetness of her voice remained unaltered to the close of her days. A few months before her decease she found, at Holly Lodge, an old collection of Scotch melodies, in which her benefactor formerly took great delight, and she sang a verse of all the collection, with considerable taste and animation. She was a great patroness of music in all degrees, from her own unrivalled concerts of opera singers down to the provincial bands of the towns and villages she visited.



Entwisle used to carry her to different houses to dance hornpipes to his playing; and after executing the dance on the same elevated stage, she used to run round its edge to levy contributions for her avaricious relatives.

Since the rage for innumerable accomplishments has prevailed in educating females, Miss Mellon used erroneously to underrate her own useful education, and to lament her comparative deficiency of accomplishments, while she undervalued the real advantages she had received. It was not within the means of the Entwises to have her taught drawing, or instrumental music; but even at this early age, at Ulverstone, she danced beautifully, an accomplishment for which she afterwards obtained much commendation in her profession; and Mr. Entwisle instructed her in vocal music sufficiently well for easy glees, or to lead a chorus. In the latter duty her name first appeared in the bills at Drury Lane.

Those who remember the family in 1784 say "the Entwises were always taking pains with Harriot." She is said to have read accurately at a very early age, and was such a winning little child that all the poor actors in the company took pleasure in teaching her some of the fine speeches she was to hear in the evening's performance.

It was generally remarked in her after-intercourse with society that her knowledge of our own language

was excellent, even to the various readings of Shakspeare's quaint idioms, in which, wherever there was a question raised, she was considered good authority.

In her ordinary conversation, to say merely that *she spoke well* is not sufficient. Her diction was remarkable for its grammatical precision; and whether suffering from illness or enjoying mirth her power of language was equally fluent.

Her style was also good in earlier days, many contemporaries having heard Mr. Sheridan say, when she first came to town, "that Miss Mellon had the best choice of language, in ordinary conversation, of any female of her age that he had met."

Her writing was a good, clear, bold hand, "dashed off" like her every other action; and it is surprising how the writing and orthography could be kept up without practice, for having secretaries on her establishment she did not actually write two letters in a whole year.

Many persons who knew the duchess state that she had a habit of collecting her ideas in the required order before she began to dictate, thus avoiding the usual misunderstandings, and the sentences consequently flowed without interruption or hesitation, as if read from a previous sketch.

The foregoing powers of mind, and the possession of much really useful knowledge, indicate that

she received a degree of early care reflecting great credit on Mr. and Mrs. Entwisle. Although for many years obliged to live on a stipend amounting to less than a pound per week to maintain three persons, they always contrived to send their little charge to school, or obtained lessons for her from a schoolmaster, paying by lessons in music from Mr. Entwisle, or by the neat-handed Mrs. Entwisle's skill in brightening up old feathers, silks, and laces. And as their straitened circumstances must, in early days, have kept them from advantageous society, it is evident there must have been continued watchful attention from some quarter to have instilled such good choice of language in one who had excessive powers of imitation, and was, therefore, more likely to cull weeds than flowers from her lowly young playmates.

The little Harriot was not insensible, at this early age, of the use to which her studies were to be applied. She always spoke of the stage, to her wondering companions, as the profession to which she would belong; and, with the most agreeable certainty of success, the conceited little creature commenced all accounts of her marvellous projects with "*When I am a fine London player.*"

Several of Mr. Entwisle's musical pupils in Lancashire are at present living: there is one at Ulverstone, now in his sixty-ninth year, who states that

“Harriot Mellon, after their first stay at Ulverstone, received tuition from the headmaster of the Town-bank School, Mr. Pearson. That young gentleman subsequently became a clergyman, and ultimately a D.D. He was at one period tutor to the Marquis of Douro, and Lord Charles Wellesley, with several other noblemen, and he lately died at Esher.”

A detail of Mr. and Mrs. Entwisle's movements after this time could have no reference or interest as regards little Harriot, until 1787, when she made her first appearance in character.

The theatre at Ulverstone was a roomy barn, belonging to the White Hart Hotel, fitted up with some care, and capable of holding many more persons than constituted the play-going population of Ulverstone. The price of admission then was one shilling for the gallery, and one shilling and sixpence for the pit, or dress portion of the house.

Mr. Entwisle's former pupil now became their landlord, and it is remarkable that, in all their various wanderings, the Entwises are described as “having lodged with very respectable persons,” generally mechanics, or the humblest grade of tradesmen, but all having borne a good reputation in their lowly station. Their landlord, who likewise performed in the orchestra, now states that “Harriot Mellon at this time was a fine, well-grown

girl, looking two or three years older than her real age, and having a sweet, clear utterance, which was heard throughout the theatre; she had a nice address, and played as if she had acted all her life; but, of course, she could only take very young characters."

Manager Bibby having been importuned by the actors who had instructed Harriot to allow her to make a *début* at once, and the Entwistles being equally urgent that she should increase their stipend, he agreed to her trying the character of *Little Pickle*. The following is the copy of a portion of the play-bill of her first appearance:—

THEATRE, ULVERSTONE.

Wednesday, October 16th, 1787, will be presented, &c.

After which, the Farce of

THE SPOILED CHILD.

Old Pickle	...	...	...	Mr. Farquharson
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Tag	...	...	...	Mr. Bibby
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Miss Pickle	...	...	...	Mrs. Blanchard
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Maria	...	...	...	Miss Valois
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and

Little Pickle	...	...	MISS MELLON (her first appearance).
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She was so well known and popular amongst the inhabitants of the town that there was an exceedingly good attendance. The landlord made her a kite rather taller than herself; his mother made her the smartest of all laurel-green tunics; and, with

her sparkling eyes, blooming cheeks, and profuse black ringlets under a fancy riding cap, she was as pretty a Little Pickle as ever played at marbles.

Manager Bibby was so satisfied that he gave the *débutante* ten shillings, and Mrs. Entwisle took admirable care that her daughter should not injure herself in expending them, for she did not leave her one penny, even as an experiment to teach her the value of money.

The first appearance of his juvenile actress had so much exceeded Manager Bibby's expectations that he resolved she should try another; and he fixed on *Priscilla Tomboy*, in "The Romp."

The part was soon acquired by the little Harriot, whose head, though in a state of joyous delirium, retained its faculty of memory; and she was so thoroughly stage-struck that a week before the night of performance she would go to any of the shops where they had patience to hear her, and, without a book, repeat the whole piece, including the stage directions; a mixture which strangely puzzled her unlearned auditors.

On the eventful afternoon she was early dressed, and she went to every one of the actors, seeking commendations of her appearance. But, alas! they all discovered, what they might have known earlier—that she looked too childish! Miss Mellon often

said no disappointment in after-life was more heavy than that caused by the general exclamation, "Oh, *Harri*, what a baby you look!"

Mrs. Entwisle, however, who had the skill of making old silks look like new, imagined some expedients to make a young lady look old. She procured a quantity of black wool, which she fashioned into a huge *tête*; over this she drew Harriot Mellon's long hair, pomatumed and powdered until the edifice on her head gave her an addition of four inches in height and of five years in appearance. The pomatum was of the most primitive kind, consisting of the candle-ends that fell to their weekly share, melted at the fire, which also roasted poor Harriot's cheeks with primitive rouge. In order to give breadth to correspond with the additional height, a quilted pink calamanco petticoat, which could stand by itself, was added. She was now considered rather too broad, therefore an addition in height was again made by a pair of high-heeled shoes, in which she went nearly as much on tiptoe as an opera-dancer.

After these improvements, a second round of criticism pronounced her appearance charming; and although it is not easy to fancy Priscilla Tom-boy executing her feats in high-heeled shoes, her success was complete.



The manager found the expedient of introducing his clever little comedian so profitable that he got up all the line of pieces in which a youthful character was employed; and for two years she continued in that constant practice of her profession which is so essential for those who are too young to have acquired a fixed style.

## CHAPTER IV.

Mrs. Jordan—T. Dibdin and “London stars” at Harrowgate—  
Revelt in the green-room—Miss Wallis—Her appearance and  
history—Embarrassment as to night quarters—Novel bed-  
chamber—Dibdin’s reminiscences—Old playbill—Ludicrous  
anecdote—Joins another company at Stafford—“Sharing  
plan”—Harriot’s wardrobe—Church-going—“High blood”—  
Early society—Juvenile terrors—Coffin bursting—Anecdote  
of mother’s violence—Improved circumstances—Private car-  
riages—Early friends.

DURING one summer, Miss Mellon and the Entwistles were staying at Otley, a small village some miles from Harrowgate; but they sometimes walked over to the latter place, in order to see the “London stars,” who occasionally came to act in Mr. Butler’s company. Mrs. Jordan played several of her best characters there, supported by the *élite* of the company, the manager and his wife, T. Dibdin, Miss Hilliar (afterwards Mrs. Dibdin), the Tayleurs, and others of less note.

It was in Mr. Butler's company that Miss Mellon first saw Miss Wallis (now Mrs. Campbell, of Kingancleugh), a young lady much respected in her private and professional career, who had come for a few nights from Covent Garden, and was staying with Lady Loughborough. That Mr. Butler was desirous of showing attention to Lady Loughborough through her *protégée*, was evident, by a singular notice, written up in the green-room, which caught the eyes of Harriot Mellon, and she never forgot it in the course of nearly half a century. It was this : "Notice. The gentlemen of the theatre are requested not to wear their hats while Miss Wallis is in the house." Miss Mellon observed, however, that an unusual number of hats were in requisition on that particular evening ; and, on inquiring the reason, she was told by one person that he had a cold—another had a headache—a third was liable to rheumatism—a fourth feared a sore throat, which would prevent his singing—and a fifth having had his hair curled and powdered, dreaded the air would disarrange it ! In fact, every theatrical discomfort was made an excuse for wearing hats, even by those who did not do so habitually ; such is the love of opposing their manager's orders inherent in the thoughts of actors ; and there was scarcely an individual (except one in a King-Charles-wig, which defied any covering) who did not act in direct

opposition to what they denominated “Butler’s stuff.”

Miss Wallis was at that time very young. She was exquisitely fair, with expressive blue eyes; all the movements of her fine figure indicated native grace and elegance, but her voice had more sweetness than strength. She retired from the stage within a few years after Miss Mellon’s first appearance in London, and, during that time, they had belonged to different theatres; but she played at Drury Lane for Wewitzer’s benefit, in 1796, as Roxalana, in the Sultan, and Miss Mellon was charmed with her talent. At Bath, the ladies presented her with a testimonial of their esteem and respect for her admirable private conduct; and every member of the most slanderous of all professions would bear testimony to her respectable character. Miss Wallis left the stage to be united to a gentleman of ancient Scotch family—Mr. Campbell of Kingancleugh, at that time in one of the regiments of guards, now a captain in the navy.

At the time Miss Mellon and Mrs. Entwisle went to Harrowgate to witness the performance of Mrs. Jordan, they were too poor to hire a lodging by the week, and beds were not to be obtained at even the minor inns, as during the season the visitors’ servants occupied all their accommodation.

After the play, the mother and daughter were too tired to return on foot to Otley, having already walked from thence during the sunny afternoon. Miss Hilliar volunteered half her couch to the young Harriot Mellon, if any other lady of their company would be equally kind to Mrs. Entwisle. The latter proposition caused as many unanswerable excuses among the theatrical heroines as Mr. Butler's bare-headed order had drawn forth from the heroes. One lady had a cough, another such a small room, a third had an invalid baby for her companion. In short, the temporary lodgings of actresses being generally inconvenient, none would accept the companionship of the full "Rubens' beauty" in August; so she had to sit up in the stage throne all night, the property man looking sadly at this treasure of cotton-velvet and brass nails, lest an unguarded nod or start might break its occupier's slumbers and the throne's back together.

Harriot Mellon and Miss Hilliar talked the whole night without thinking or wishing for sleep one instant; the latter confiding to her new friend the *tendresse* between herself and the afterwards celebrated Thomas Dibdin, whom she was about to marry. This was the first love-secret little Harriot ever heard, and she felt herself at least ten years older for the confidence reposed in her. The two

young girls became vowed friends, and their friendship was renewed and maintained afterwards in London, until death broke the bonds.

During Mrs. Entwisle's walk homewards, on the following morning, her temper was not in its gentlest mood after an uncomfortable night's rest, and, as usual, Harriot had to encounter its keen edge. "Miss Wallis is just that nice, clever young lady I should wish *you* to be, you stupid creature; but you don't mind the lessons in acting which I gave you. The day will come when she will have a carriage; you will be splashed by it; and I hope she will drive over you!"

Mr. T. Dibdin, the dramatic author, has recalled the following souvenir of those days:—

"On another occasion, during the same summer, they came again to Harrowgate on the arrival of some London performers, and after the play was over they supped with the narrator, who had invited several of the Harrowgate company to meet Miss Mellon and her mother. During the evening, the observant young girl gave such clever, spirited imitations of some of the acting she had just witnessed, that a very young comedian who was present remarked to her, 'Your talent will one day place you on the London boards, and then do not forget to use your interest towards procuring a situation for me!' 'It will not be wanted,' Miss Mellon

replied, ‘for you look as if *you* were destined to be a London manager, and then you will be more likely, if willing, to serve me.’ ”

This circumstance is only worth remark, as the two predictions were, many years afterwards, exactly fulfilled.

Towards the close of 1789, there was a deficiency in the number of actresses in Bibby’s company ; and as the active life (and, perhaps, the late hours) of Harriot Mellon had increased her stature greatly beyond her years, the manager was glad to give her an older line of parts than she had hitherto tried, or the theatre must have failed altogether for want of a young heroine.

On the 31st of October, he wished to produce *Inckle and Yarico* ; the characters of *Yarico*, *Wow-ski*, and *Patty* were sustained by Mrs. Blanchard, Miss Valois, and Mrs. Farquharson ; and there remained *Narcissa*, and no one to act it, so it was given to little Harriot Mellon.

A curious old playbill, with her name and the date, is still extant, beginning thus :—

“ On the 12th of December, 1789, the company will perform, *As you Like it* ; or, *Love in a Forest*, written by Shakspeare.”

Here was a grand effort requiring all their forces, for there were four actresses and eight actors



wanted; Rosalind, Celia, and Audrey, of course, were first claimed, leaving Phebe for little Harriot.

Great was her pride on being allowed to try such a character, "written by Shakspeare," as the playbills kindly explained; it seemed such a rise in her profession that the *Little Pickles* and *Priscilla Tomboys* sunk into mere practisings for this event.

"As You Like It" was always a favourite play with the late duchess; and in her days of better acting she obtained much commendation in each of the other female characters, frequently selecting one or other for her benefits.

It is curious that, in an hotel-barn, while almost a child, and poor in the extreme, she first tried a woman's character, in *Phebe*: and that, twenty-six years afterwards, she retired from Drury Lane stage, as *Audrey* in the same piece, to become the richest woman in England.

From the number of actors required, Mr. Entwisle was obliged to act Duke Frederick; but his name does not frequently appear in the country playbills; indeed, he was too dull of intellect to make an actor.\*

\* Copy of the cast from the playbill:—Jacques—Mr. Penn. Orlando—Mr. Blanchard. Oliver—Mr. Farquharson. Banished Duke—Mr. Dunn. Duke Frederick—Mr. Entwisle. Adam—Mr. Leigh. Corin—Mr. Cocker; and Touchstone—Mr. Bibby. Audrey—Mrs. Ferguson. Celia, with the song—Miss Valois. Phebe—Miss Mellon; and Rosalind—Mrs. Blanchard.

The after-piece was the Quaker, in which *Gillian* was entrusted to Harriot.

After this grand step in her profession, the company removed to Blackburn; and, before Mrs. Entwisle would allow Harriot to perform, she demanded an increase to her salary. Mr. Bibby consulted his accounts, and made her the tremendous offer of four shillings and sixpence per week!

This illiberal proposal roused the spirit of the applicant; or, more probably, she seized on it as a pretext for executing her plan for improving their condition. Therefore, declining the agreement for Harriot, she at the same time relinquished, in her husband's name, his engagement of leading the orchestra.

Harriot and Mr. Entwisle had under these circumstances no course but to submit; and the next question was, where were they to go? But the ambitious Irishwoman had already settled this. During her travels with the Kenas, they had been for a short time with the company of the western midland counties, under the management of Mr. Stanton. Here she had seen very superior arrangements, and that the manager's family were invited to the best houses on their circuit: so that, intent on her one view of advancing her little girl in society, she always longed to join this company if possible. Hearing that they were playing at

Stafford, the family trio made their way thither. Mr. Entwisle and Harriot waited on the manager, and gave a specimen of their abilities, with which that gentleman was so satisfied that he promised them both an engagement in a month or so.

Whilst waiting for this engagement, she acted in some of the smaller towns, and a company with whom she was associated were fortunate enough to obtain "a bespeak," a technicality scarcely requiring explanation for even the unprofessional. The manager, attired in the best suit his wardrobe affords, calls upon the principal family in the vicinity of the town, and requests them to name a play which they will honour with their presence; if they do so, the night is also nominated by them, and the playbill is grandly headed—"The bespeak of the Right Honourable Lord and Lady," &c., &c.

On the occasion to which allusion is now made, the play bespoken by the patrons of the drama was, "The Country Girl," which was not one the company had been in the habit of performing; but from the celebrity of Mrs. Brown in the York circuit, and of Mrs. Jordan (who was accused of imitating her) at Drury Lane, it was just then very popular. The manager bowed his acknowledgments, said his company would be quite ready on the following Thursday (this was on Monday) and came away well satisfied.

The company were called together, the happy announcement made, Sir —— and Lady —— had given “a bespeak,” and the “Country Girl” was the play. Everyone had heard of the piece, some had seen it, but no one had a copy. This was a difficulty that had not been anticipated; but difficulties are only made to be surmounted; and the next hour an adventurous Thespian was seen *en route* to Leeds for a copy of the play. As, for reasons best known to himself, he chose the primitive mode of pedestrianism on his journey, it may be supposed it was late on Tuesday night ere he returned, worn out with fatigue. On Wednesday, the book (there was only one) was divided leaf by leaf, and given to each to write out his part. At that period, although not half a century ago, the schoolmaster was not abroad; some of the company could not write, and it would not be very far from the truth if we added, that one or two actually could scarcely read, but relied for the acquisition of the text on hearing the part read over to them several times. Miss Mellon was cast for Peggy, not only because she was the youngest person and the best actress in the company, but also in consequence of having the best “study,” as memory is technically termed.

It was Thursday morning, the play day, ere she had written out the whole of the part, and then she

discovered she must provide herself with a dress of the fop of the day, for the scene in which Peggy goes in boy's clothes to the park! Applying to what the manager facetiously denominated his wardrobe, would have been totally useless; and, in this dilemma, Mrs. Entwisle bethought her of all the persons known to her in the vicinity, to whom she might confide her trouble. Among others, she applied to the housekeeper in a wealthy family, who said she would ask one of the young gentlemen of her master's family. This Mrs. Entwisle wisely and firmly declined. After a great deal of anxiety on the subject, the housekeeper mysteriously said, she had an idea she could procure a small suit elsewhere, and promised to call on Mrs. Entwisle after the rehearsal, to relate the success of her project.

To the theatre went the hapless Harriot, in a state bordering on distraction, anticipating the necessity of representing the country girl in a snuff-coloured, square-cut coat (taken in all its tawdriness from the wardrobe), made for a man some six feet high.

The afternoon came and went, and no housekeeper. At about four o'clock, however, she made her appearance, and behind her followed a lad with a large parcel. The hearts of mother and daughter fluttered—"there was the dress at last;" it proved to be so. Their old lady said "she had called upon

another old lady, who lived in a similar capacity, and was happy to say she had procured, not the clothes of any of the young gentlemen, but the wedding dress of her old master; and as he was only a '*dwarfy*,' even in his youth, they'd be sure to fit Miss Harriot."

It may be supposed that Miss Harriot looked rather saddened when she heard they were at least thirty years old; but fashions then did not change with the rapidity of the present day, and at all events, be they what they might, they would be far better than anything the theatre's wardrobe could afford. The valuable collection was opened, and displayed to their longing eyes a light amber-coloured silk coat, trimmed with silver; a white satin waistcoat, ditto smalls, and pale-blue silk stockings; shoes, laced stock, ruffles, buckles; in fact, every item of the wardrobe worn on the wedding day.

What a happy girl was Harriot Mellon! The things were a little out of date it was true, but they were new—never but once had been profaned by a male form; a little cotton in the shoes was required, and with a little tucking up and taking in, the dress fitted to a miracle. After a profusion of thanks on one side, and admiration on the other, the old lady departed, and Miss Mellon and her mother went to the theatre.

Half-past six arrived, and the one musician (Mr. Entwisle) led off with "Rule Britannia," "Britons Strike Home," and "The Bonny Pitman," an air then, and perhaps now, a favourite in the north. Up went the curtain, and the play commenced. The house, or barn, was crowded to excess. The *élite* of the neighbourhood all attended, being more anxious to testify their respect to the baronet who patronized the performance than their admiration of the dramatic company.

The play, hurriedly as it had been produced, went on capitally. The family whose "bespeak" had proved so attractive were in what, out of courtesy, must be termed the *stage-box*; and at an early part of the evening they singled out Miss Mellon (probably from her extreme youth and talent) as the principal object of their applause.

Those who look at plays through the medium of metropolitan performances can scarcely conceive what a young aspiring actor or actress feels when making their incipient steps in a place scarcely the size of a dining-room, where they can hear every murmur of applause or displeasure, and catch a glance of hope from the "very well indeed!" of a fashionable party on one side, or be depressed by the adverse "Oh, dear!" of another.

Miss Mellon (or rather her mother for her, for she was too busy in re-reading Peggy) was satisfied



she had made an impression on the great people ; and her scene *en garçon* was anticipated as the completion of a triumph. At length it came—on she went, amid the gratifying plaudits of the entire audience. She looked beautiful, and as to her dress, it was magnificent. That the country folks thought so was apparent ; but what was even more gratifying, the “great party,” the baronet and his lady, evidently took particular notice of it. This notice continued, in fact, throughout the scene, and the play ended amid tumultuous applause. Miss Mellon sung between play and farce (accompanied by the single fiddle), and was encored ; and finished her evening’s exertions by performing Miss Biddy, in “Miss in her Teens.” All succeeded capitally, so that the mother and daughter retired to rest congratulating themselves on the result of the evening’s entertainments.

On the following morning, whilst sitting at the window, after their frugal breakfast, they observed a groom coming towards the house, and the livery was that of Sir —— . A hundred hopes were raised at his approach, and all but confirmed when he rapped with his whip (there was no knocker) at the cottage door. “A letter for Miss Mellon.” To fly downstairs, receive it, ask the servant to wait, rush up again, and tear it open, was the work of a second. No eulogiums, no present, but a somewhat stiff, yet

courteous note, "requesting Miss Mellon, for particular reasons, to say how she became possessed of the male attire worn by her on the previous evening."

It may be as well to pass over the correspondence, which ended at length in a meeting between Mrs. Entwisle, Miss Mellon, and Sir ——; when, angry as he was, the ingenuous manner of both, and the round, unvarnished tale delivered, disarmed him.

The truth lay in a nutshell. The housekeeper to whom Mrs. Entwisle had applied (not being able to oblige her herself, and not knowing when or for what the dress was required) went to the housekeeper of the very gentleman who bespoke the play, having, it is presumed, on some of their old lady meetings, seen and admired the wedding dress that had been put away since the baronet's marriage. This, as an article of attire that would assuredly not be called into requisition by the family, had been lent; hence the observation in the theatre, the letter, and the explanation. Miss Mellon was of course cleared from any imputation, and found at her benefit a friend in the family; and the poor housekeeper, after a severe reprimand, was forgiven.

On leaving the place, Miss Mellon received as a present from Lady —— the first good frock she ever possessed, and from that period she looked so

well on the stage that even had she possessed less talent she would still have been a desideratum to a country manager.

1789.—When Mr. and Mrs. Entwisle, with Harriot Mellon, joined the theatrical company of Mr. Stanton, it was conducted on the general method which prevailed in provincial circuits forty years ago—what is called a “*sharing plan*.” As this system is now scarcely practised, it may not be uninteresting to give a brief detail of its meaning.

The manager provided the dresses, scenery, theatre, &c., and was entitled to four shares of the general profit. The leader of the musical department had a salary of one guinea per week; the stage manager and wardrobe keeper twelve or fourteen shillings; and every performer on the stage, whether good or bad, was entitled to one share from the profits. As they were not expected to provide anything professionally from their one share, while the manager from his four shares had to furnish theatre, scenery, and dresses, it seems wonderful that the love of dominion should have induced anyone to become captain of such “a troop.” He was likewise obliged to defray the expense of extra instruments in the orchestra. The theatres were always temporary, generally being the town hall fitted up with portable decorations.

When it is considered that the price of admission

was but two shillings to the pit, there being no boxes, and one shilling to the gallery, it is only surprising how so many individuals were maintained by the profits of these small houses.

The principal towns in Mr. Stanton's circuit were Stafford, Newcastle-under-Lyne, Burton, Ashbourne, Walsall, Bridgenorth, Nantwich, Newport, Drayton, Leek, and Lichfield.

Within the last forty years several of these towns have had good-sized theatres erected, many of them planned by the friends of Miss Mellon's juvenile days, and the sons of the manager, one of whom was a pupil of Columbo, the painter of the opera-house scenery. The family of Mr. Stanton were all well brought up and clever; his daughters were Mrs. Nunn and Mrs. Goodall, names of very good repute in the theatrical world. The former, who had appeared in London, in 1786, as *Clarissa*, afterwards took considerable pains in giving instruction to Harriot Mellon. Mrs. Goodall (who was married to a naval officer) was the celebrated *Rosalind*. Mr. Stanton's family were much respected, and during their circuit visited at all the principal houses in the different neighbourhoods, and this was doubtless the motive for Mrs. Entwisle's anxiety that they should patronize and introduce her little girl, a point of which she never lost sight.

The Entwises occupied lodgings in a cottage be-

longing to a poor, but highly respectable individual, a shoemaker named Thornton, and the rooms (still standing) are so miserably small that the admeasure-ment has been taken as a curiosity : they were each but 10 feet long by  $4\frac{3}{4}$  feet across ; and the window about two feet square. For this accommodation half-a-crown per week was paid.

The next consideration was, to procure an instructor for Harriot ; and a Mr. Caulkin there taught writing and arithmetic to the hand that was destined to sign the distribution of thousands ; though at that time it could not command sufficient to pay the schoolmaster, one of whose relations took lessons on the violin as an equivalent from Mr. Entwisle.

As the company was very superior to that which they had left, Harriot Mellon had to relinquish her Phebes and Gillians, and resume the children's character—Little Pickle, the Romp, &c., for which she was suited ; consequently she had only half a share from the theatre, and Mr. Entwisle (who was not then leader, but one of three who played in addition) was stage keeper and property man also, therefore he had a whole share.

The company consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Stanton, eight actors, four actresses, and the leader of the band, who received a guinea per week, but no share.

According to their moderate charge for admis-

sion, if the theatre produced about eight pounds nightly, the performance taking place three times per week, would give twenty-four pounds; after deducting the weekly expenses of about six pounds, seventeen guineas would remain for division; the twelve performers would have a guinea each, the manager and his wife taking five guineas for their performances, use of scenery, dresses, &c.

On such small means, it cannot be supposed that Harriot's wardrobe was very splendid. It is known at Stafford that her morning dress was too shabby for her to appear at the churches there, and her mother used to send her regularly to Ingestrie Church (built by Lord Talbot, and adjoining his mansion), because she was less liable there to incur remark on the poverty of her appearance.

The vale between Lord Talbot's estate and the town was a great gathering place for the children to play; and Harriot, whose love of amusement was unconquerable, used to steal out perpetually from her close room to this pretty spot, where she was unrivalled among the "young ladies" as a player at ball. Numbers of her playmates are now living, and well remember the disagreeable interruption which Mrs. Entwisle would cause in her daughter's athletic amusements, by driving her home with heavy blows (some of which occasionally fell on the associates), and amidst dreadful reproaches, the

perpetual taunt that she was "a disgrace to the high blood in her veins."

The wondering children, who were all better dressed than the vagrant member of the aristocracy, used to torment poor Harriot dreadfully respecting the visionary grandeur. She bore it all with perfect good humour, if they would only play ball with her; and their assemblies were delightful until the light-footed Mrs. Entwisle would slip in amongst them, and disperse the terrified mockers of high blood like chaff before the wind.

Mrs. Entwisle, in addition to being dresser to the actresses,\* continued her usual industry, in cleaning feathers, silks, laces, &c., and exacted that Harriot should assist her, frequently obliging her daughter to put down the play-book from which she was studying, in order to lend the aid of her little fingers for some delicate process. But all the time she was thus engaged, she had to repeat the play to her busy mother, who gave her lessons in what she called "the high style of London acting," which she despondingly averred Harriot would never attain.

The family of the manager soon became interested in, and attached to, the little player, who, notwithstanding her active and rather ungirlish amusements,

\* Among these was the celebrated Mrs. Davenport, on whom the duchess settled an annuity for life of £20, in memory of "auld lang syne."



had very engaging manners, and was extremely docile and grateful under their care. They now began to take her out to juvenile parties with their younger children, for which Mrs. Entwisle was most grateful; and Harriot, in neat clothes, lent by her friends, soon became very popular, from her pretty style of singing, and executing the fancy dances of those days.

Giddy as she was, nothing could exceed her care of articles lent to her; if it were not too late, it is said, they were always returned on the same evening after the party, or, at the furthest, early next morning. Her attention was frequently rewarded by a present of the dress which she had so punctually restored; and she began now to have a wardrobe of her own, entitling her to appear at church in Stafford, without a recurrence of former discredit.

Mrs. Entwisle, who appropriated the whole of Harriot's earnings to the family expenditure, was very proud of her girl's success. Yet the harshness with which she treated her is fresh in the memory of all who knew them.

Although Miss Mellon was blessed with most robust health, she was at all times extremely nervous at any sudden alarm, for which she accounted in a very natural manner. After her mother married Mr. Entwisle, they went on a visit to a member of his family who had some employment in a country

church, and their house (formerly the parsonage) stood actually in the churchyard. The graves being frequently dug close to the lowly tenement, the earth had risen nearly half-way up the one-storied dilapidated building, which had no windows towards the churchyard. One Saturday night a sister of Mr. Entwisle's was proceeding to perform the usual ablutions on the little Harriot Mellon, and, for this purpose, had placed her seated on the dresser, with a large tub of water at her feet. Suddenly a loud sound, as of something being burst asunder, was heard: the wall behind the dresser was rent open, and the little girl violently pushed forward, actually into the tub of water. There Harriot lay screaming (Miss Entwisle being too much frightened to lift her), until the noise attracted the notice of her mother, who ran to the kitchen, where she found her child overwhelmed with bricks and mortar; while, above her, the end of a coffin protruded two or three feet into the opening of the wall! Having rescued the youthful sufferer, it was ascertained that a grave had been dug against the house (which was sunk in the floors below the level of the churchyard), and the body which was interred had swollen, and burst its narrow home with such force that the end of the coffin had pushed against the old wall (decayed from long damp) and carried down everything before it. When her spirits were depressed in after days, Miss

M. often said that the ghastly-looking black and silver coffin frequently occurred to her fancy with something of its old terrors !

The terror, also, in which little Harriot continually lived, from the unrestrained violence of her mother's temper, affected her nerves to a degree which returned to her in her latter years, when the slightest cause of alarm produced in her extreme fear, before she had time to summon reason to conquer it.

With the exaggeration of childish terror, she more than once thought her mother was going to fulfil the threat of taking away her child's life. The following occurrence was related to the agent sent to Stafford to collect materials for this work by an individual who was at that time a youth in the theatrical company :—

Harriot Mellon was announced at Bridgenorth during the winter of 1790 for some juvenile character, and the narrator took his place in the orchestra to see the performance. The overture had terminated, and had been played again, yet still the curtain was not raised. After a considerable delay the piece commenced, and when the scene came wherein Harriot Mellon should have appeared, another child went through the character. Alarmed at the absence of his playmate, the narrator left the orchestra, and heard the following strange tale :—Mrs. Entwisle, it appeared, had had a quarrel with

her daughter respecting the performance ; and she had beaten poor Harriot so severely, while dressing for her part, that the latter ran out of the house without her frock, shawl, or bonnet, her mother following with vows of vengeance. Fear lent the girl wings to avoid her parent's rage ; she ran through the North Gate and entered some fields, where her mother soon lost all trace of the fugitive. It was perfectly dark, and a severe frost had for some time prevailed. The performance concluded ; but the frightened child did not return. Mr. and Mrs. Entwisle searched every house in Bridgenorth likely to have sheltered her, but all in vain ; and all the manager's sons were out during the entire night, taking various directions about the environs of the town, and carrying their piteous inquiries to the different farmhouses. No intelligence was to be obtained of her having taken shelter from the severe cold, which the searchers found almost too intense to endure ; therefore the general dread was that the despairing child had fallen, or thrown herself, into the river.

The manager's kind family came in at different times next day from their fruitless search, greatly distressed at the fate of their little companion. It was Sunday, and about midday, the family party had just assembled at dinner, when Harriot Mellon slowly put her face into the room, but scarcely

bearing the appearance of anything human. Her arms were pressed tightly across her figure, shivering with cold; her fine complexion was totally concealed by a thick coating of black, which was furrowed by the tears she had shed during the night; and on seeing her friends they flowed again profusely. One of the daughters hurried the half-clad girl out of the room, while she exclaimed, "Oh! let me but go near the fire!" and having been washed and dressed from her young friend's wardrobe, she re-entered in terror, and gave the following account of the way she had passed the night:—"After escaping from my mother, I ran on in the dark across numbers of fields, still frightened, and thinking I heard the sound of her steps and voice on the wind. I wandered on until I was obliged to stop, from being so tired; and I cried a long time. Then I saw some lights at a distance, which I took for Bridgenorth; and I set out again to reach them, though I was almost too cold to move. When I came near to the lights I found they were great smoky fires from brick-kilns and coal-pits. To warm myself I drew near to the fires, but the frightful men I saw attending them alarmed me so much that I was obliged to hide myself in the thick smoke, and to change my place very often to escape being seen by them. When daylight came I left the smoke, which could no longer hide me; and I

wandered through the fields until I saw the dear church-steeple of Bridgenorth; but I dared not enter the town for fear of being seen, so I lingered in the most lonely fields until I knew by the sun that most people would be in their houses at dinner, and then I came to you!"

From the extreme severity of the night, and her partial state of clothing, it was surprising the poor girl had not perished with the cold. Her very long black hair, covered with hoar frost, was matted in heavy masses; her face and neck blackened with the brick-kiln smoke, and scored with her tears; so that altogether the pretty Harriot was changed to the semblance of a sprite from the lower regions.

She had not broken her fast since the preceding day's dinner, and was quite faint from exhaustion; but while they administered some food, Mr. and Mrs. Entwisle, by an unfortunate chance, entered the room! Like a startled hare, Harriot flew into a corner behind the chairs to avoid her mother, who passionately exclaimed, "Let me reach her—I will be the death of her!" All violence was, however, prevented by the family of the manager, except the violence of a tongue which nothing could allay. "Where have you passed the night, you young hussy? You, a high-born person's child, to go away from your mother—yes, you are a great person's daughter, though you behave so ill

to me—but we little guessed the wretch you would turn out ! ”

These and similar speeches of violence continued for some time without intermission, the family pitying the poor cowering girl too much to allow the angry woman to approach her hiding-place. At length, when the manager calmly, but with decision, told her he could not feel justified in trusting her good, unoffending child home again until Mrs. Entwisle pledged her word solemnly that she would act more kindly for the future, she gave this promise with a very bad grace ; and then a fresh scene ensued, to induce poor Harriot to go home. She clung in an agony of terror to the friendly manager, and he was obliged to leave the house, half-leading, half-supporting, the terrified child to her home, where he reminded Mrs. Entwisle again of her solemn engagement, and left the disunited family.

There was not much hope of amendment in this violent woman, and, indeed, her temper was impaired by the weak extravagance of Mr. Entwisle, whose love of low conviviality induced him to waste in company the money which was so much wanted at home.

Her patrons found the only way to secure even quiet for poor Harriot was to allow her to study her characters at their house ; for the disputes at



her own home rendered study impossible. These visits formed her manners for her profession.

About this time the sharing system of the theatres was exchanged for regular salaries ; Harriot Mellon had fifteen shillings, and her stepfather one guinea weekly, besides the profits of his playing at dances during the three unoccupied nights of the week. This enabled them to take much better lodgings, the first floor at the house of a painter, in the part of Stafford called Diglake. It is a very respectable-looking building, having a garden at the back, to which Harriot was perfectly devoted, and she used to beg flowers from everyone, until the crowded plants choked each other.

They lodged here until her London engagement, after which she never performed at Stafford ; but she always retained an affection for the widowed landlady, Mrs. Walker, and annually sent her some gowns, a winter cloak and shawl, with other articles of dress. She also remembered that the old lady was extremely particular respecting her tea, and there was always in the parcel a quantity of loaf sugar and a sufficiency of tea to last until her next parcel. Miss Mellon continued this grateful donation until her old friend's decease. In one of her letters she asked most anxiously about an old wardrobe in which her clothes had been kept, begging they would take care of it. This, with the old oak

table in the room, are now preserved as relics at Stafford.

At Burton-on-Trent there is a little anecdote remembered respecting her early love of fun, showing the merry, innocent creature she was ; and, even in those days, she was superior to the false pride of which her mother set her so bad an example.

After having performed *Little Pickle* at Burton, she found a very kind patroness in the wife of a rich coach-maker, a Mrs. Deakin, who always had little Harriot to sleep at her house while staying in that town.

As the Entwistles were too poor to pay for a conveyance, the party had arrived on foot ; and some visitor at Mrs. Deakin's, who had seen Harriot thus entering the town, stupidly asked her afterwards "Why she did not travel by the coach?" The arch girl, looking significantly at her patroness, replied, "Because the coach is a *public* conveyance, sir, and I never in my life have been in any but *private* carriages!"

"Indeed!" returned the other, incredulously ; "and pray, Miss Harriot, where did you find these private carriages?"

"Why, here, in Mr. Deakin's building-yard, to be sure!" said the young hoaxer, laughing. "I never had money to pay for a real ride, but I get into every one of the new carriages in the yard when I

am here, and rock myself in them for hours, they are so nice. Is not that going in private carriages, sir ?”

While at Burton-on-Trent, Harriot had been much noticed also by one of the principal families, who, hearing from the manager a most favourable account of her steadiness and good conduct, gave her an introduction to their friends at Stafford, the family of Mr. Wright, the banker; and from hence may be dated her rise in the world. Some of the family were older, some younger, than Harriot; but they all united in being very fond of the lively “player girl,” and in making every interest for her advancement. The amiable girls took delight in dressing her for the characters she played, contributing gowns, gloves, and shoes, and the use of their jewellery. She had a general invitation to their hospitable house for all the nights when she did not perform; and as the principal families of Stafford visited there three nights at least in each week, she had the advantage of being in their society.

Thus she gradually became acquainted with, and patronized by, the following ladies:—The Misses Williamson, whose father was a barrister, and died chairman of the quarter sessions. Miss Fernehough, whose family, with the Wrights and the Williamsons, were the leading individuals of the place; Miss Fernehough afterwards married General Sir Frederick Robinson, went to Jamaica, and died there.

The Misses Keen, whose father was a marshal, as it is termed there (some situation connected with the Welsh judges). His widow was excessively partial to Harriot Mellon. Miss Hughes, a friend of the Misses Wright, and Mrs. Barrs, the banker's sister.

All these ladies vied with each other in acts of kindness to their young *protégée*, having her with them during the mornings and at their evening parties. All who are living now bear testimony to her excellent conduct, from their first acquaintance to the time she left Stafford finally, when she was between seventeen and eighteen. Her conduct was also fully estimated among the inferior classes; and such was the fair name she bore, that any insult to her would have been taken up seriously by her legion of humble champions, the famed "Stafford shoemakers," who still claim her birth for their county. The thoughtful Mrs. Entwisle also, in order to set malice at defiance, never allowed Harriot to return home alone in the evening. She took her to parties, and called for her again, without entering the houses; for the *élite* of Stafford society, who were happy to have the youthful actress among them, did not think it requisite to invite her relations, and Mrs. Entwisle was sufficiently delighted with her daughter's elevation without any attention extending to herself.

Miss Mellon, whose height increased rapidly, now

began to take pride in neat personal appearance ; and the old wardrobe at Mrs. Walker's being filled by the liberality of her friends, she became comparatively a great belle.

A very estimable patroness of hers, still living at Stafford, says, with reference to this and the four succeeding years, " A better-conducted, more industrious, or praiseworthy girl there could not be. She was very handsome, very lively, highly amusing, and perfectly lady-like, although not what is termed accomplished ; she sang pleasantly, and was an admirable dancer. I was introduced to her by Miss Wright, and assisted her benefit, sometimes lending her my dresses. She was the most punctual and particular person I ever knew. If it were not too late, she would invariably return everything she had borrowed on the same night ; and all was kept in such good order that it was impossible to decide whether the dress had been used. Her mother was very careful of her, always accompanying her home, though it were but a few yards. But Harriot was universally respected."

Another authority of an humbler grade, who was professionally connected with the family, states : " Miss Mellon was a great favourite among the principal families, and with all the young people of both sexes ; she was a very steady, prudent girl, remarkably handsome, and always smiling and pleasant looking. The mother was a gay, pretty

woman ; but very rough with her daughter occasionally. Although Harriot's salary was fifteen shillings per week, they were in straitened circumstances, because her step-father was disposed to drinking and low company. Miss Mellon's situation between the two, who disagreed exceedingly, was greatly pitied ; so that even among the poorer classes (especially the shoemakers, with which Stafford abounds) she was an excessive favourite, and greatly respected. In those days, when young women did not venture through the streets after nightfall, she would have been secure through the estimation in which she was held. She had the best benefits of any that were taken—a houseful and presents in addition.

“Miss Mellon and Mrs. Nunn were the best actresses we ever had in Stafford. She could show a little temper sometimes at the theatre, and was uncommonly particular about her dresses. She had her own way very much with the manager, and was made much of by him (as well as by his eldest son, who was said to be attached to her) and the few of the first people in Stafford who were admitted behind the scenes, including the nobility and gentry who came during the races. She lived entirely with the young ladies of the leading families, until she left for London—her home being so uncomfortable she had no peace there.”

## CHAPTER V.

Travelling extraordinary—Gallantry of a letter carrier—Its unfortunate result—Stafford Theatre—Habits of Mr. Entwisle—Domestic scenes—Friend's pony—Anecdote—Poor prisoners—Sheridan's visit to Stafford—Sees Miss Mellon, and promises an engagement at Drury Lane—Anecdote—Removal to London.

THE characters in which, from the age of fourteen to eighteen, Miss Mellon gradually advanced and improved in the Stafford circuit were: *Priscilla Tomboy*, in "The Romp;" *Sophia*, in the "Road to Ruin;" *Betty Blackberry*, in "The Farmer;" *Jenny Wronghead*, in "The Provoked Husband;" *Kathleen*, in "The Poor Soldier;" *Cowslip*, in "The Agreeable Surprise;" *Beatrice*, *Celia*, *Audrey*, and, latterly, *Lydia Languish*, *Letitia Hardy*, and *Moggy*, in "The Highland Reel;" her excellent dancing having been very effective in the two latter.

When the company went from Stafford to Uttoxeter, Mr. Entwisle's party was delayed beyond



the others through the dilatory habits of that gentleman. His wife, after expressing her impatience, set off and provided herself with a seat in a travelling market-cart; Mr. Entwisle went to an adjoining village, where he was to preside over some games; therefore poor Harriot was left without conveyance or money. She had been latterly playing such womanly parts that, although scarcely sixteen, she would not condescend to let the childish tears fall, but they gathered fast as she thought over her troubles, and how she was to rejoin her party. Not wishing to disgust her friends by a history which must expose the family dissensions, the poor young girl resolved to walk the distance, upwards of ten miles. On the road she was overtaken by a letter-carrier of the name of Cornwall, who, wondering to see Miss Mellon out of charge of her mother, inquired the cause. Her poor little heart was so sad at her lonely position that the rebel tears *would* come after his kind question, which was only answered by sobs. At length he gathered the truth; and the good-natured man placed her in a cottage, requesting her to wait until his return. He then rode back to Stafford, procured a pillion to his saddle, and calling for Miss Mellon mounted her behind him; in which manner they arrived at Uttoxeter. Whether or not the actors, in gratitude for his care of their young

friend, made him drink too many libations, certain it is that the poor fellow in returning home was stopped and robbed by footpads; and all the consolation he received was the magistrates' clerk saying that "perhaps riding with pretty Miss Mellon at his back all the morning had *turned his head*, and prevented his looking before him!"

The theatricals of Stafford were for many years exhibited in the Town Hall, which stood on pillars, and the market was held beneath it. A question was raised in 1790 as to pulling down this edifice; and Mr. Stanton considered it necessary to provide a theatre for his performances before this was decided. Accordingly a subscription for building by shares was commenced, and the present theatre erected. The wear of nearly half a century has not improved its first appearance, which was of the most unpretending kind; and it still bears the one original coat of paint of its youthful days. It is a dilapidated brick-building, scarcely higher than a single-storied house, and has an iron grating a foot or so from the roof in front for the admission of air and light. It is calculated that a full attendance would produce about forty-five pounds; but on grand occasions ten additional pounds have been managed.

While the theatre was being built, the company removed to Leek, in Staffordshire; and the follow-

ing statement from an authentic source there is given verbatim to show the exact state of Harriot Mellon's home.

“While residing at Leek Mr. Entwisle endeavoured to increase his means by giving music lessons; but in that quiet provincial town there were few gentlemen desirous of becoming Paganinis of their day, and consequently he had few pupils for the violin. His acquirements as a piano player were very slender, but they sufficed to teach the rudiments to such young ladies as had inherited the spinnets and musical taste of their grandmammas; therefore his pupils were chiefly among the fairer class. Unfortunately the time expended in these tuition mornings seemed to Mrs. Entwisle greater than was warranted by the emolument, and this theme was a frequent source of family discord. The situation of Miss Mellon, who had to remain in the same room with the disputants, where she was generally studying some character to be performed in the evening, really deserved commiseration.

“Another source of discomfort soon exercised its influence. Staffordshire was then more of a dancing than a musical county, and as the theatre was open only three nights a week, the violin of Mr. Entwisle was in great demand at divers places of amusement in the neighbourhood. It frequently occurred that his return from the village Almack's was about the

hour of Mrs. Entwisle's early breakfast. Her just indignation found utterance, but banished all preparations for breakfast, and during the war of words which ensued the hour for Harriot's rehearsal at the theatre would arrive. She was constantly sent there breakfastless, with an injunction to make an excuse for Mr. Entwisle's absence through severe indisposition.

"During the course of the rehearsal she generally had the annoyance of hearing that her father was walking about the town in perfect health, and seeking to drown care according to his own system.

"For a creature young, ingenuous, naturally abstemious, industrious, proud, and ambitious, it is not possible to conceive a situation much more humiliating or painful, without a penny from her scanty salary which she might calculate on the power of using, her talents taxed to the utmost—(not for the necessities of herself, or even her mother, but for the follies of one who was no relation)—and the results of the temper he excited in her mother all falling on the unoffending girl, who was the chief support of both parties."

One of their common exhibitions of mutual anger was the destruction of glasses, cups, plates, &c., belonging to their lodgings, and these had to be replaced out of Miss Mellon's salary. An individual now living, who was at that time connected

with the company, recollects the pretty Harriot coming in tears to the theatre early one morning to borrow from the property-man some of the tin stage-cups in order to have her breakfast, the earthenware having suffered demolition by wrath during the preparation of the tea.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the principal residents of the place took a great interest in the exemplary girl, who, encountering wretchedness at home and admiration and homage abroad, conducted herself with a degree of propriety beyond all praise. She soon became a morning and evening guest at all the best houses, repaying her friends by a constant fund of good temper and liveliness, so that they often regretted when her mother called for her in the midst of her imitations and anecdotes.

In some of the towns where Mr. Stanton's company performed Harriot Mellon's patronesses considered her so superior to her position, that, besides having her with them whenever she was not at the theatre, they would not allow her to lodge with the Entwistles, but gave her a bed in their own houses.

Thus at Drayton, when the company stayed there, the clergyman of the parish, the Rev. P. Stubbs, always allowed his wife to have Miss Mellon on a visit at their house during the whole time of her stay in the neighbourhood, and she used to sleep with

one or other of his daughters, if "sleeping" it might be called, when the merry creatures talked and laughed almost throughout the night. These estimable friends of her youth, of whom the duchess often spoke, all married extremely well at Liverpool, and used to patronize her benefits there after her London engagement.

In 1792 Stafford new theatre opened, and Miss Mellon's salary was raised to one guinea per week, an advantage to her mother but not to herself, for the former rigidly kept her without the slightest portion of her own earnings.

A little illustration of this system comes in the form of a reminiscence from a lively contemporary of hers while there. The Misses Wright, who were Harriot Mellon's standard of taste for everything, possessed a beautiful pony, on which they used to ride daily round the pretty environs of the town. A great object of Harriot's secret ambition was to be allowed a trial of her equestrian powers, and when these friends one day volunteered the use of the pony and an ample riding skirt nothing could exceed her joy, though she had too much good sense and modesty to have asked so great a favour.

Off trotted Harriot, with her own Welsh hat at the back of her head, looking the happiest creature on earth, and though she grasped the pommel with both her hands, her laughing friends felt the greater

security that she would not fall. Concluding that her high spirits would induce her to ride on, unmindful of time, they made up their minds that nothing but the darkness would bring her back, therefore the party were astonished when in about a quarter of an hour they espied poor Harriot jogging back again, holding by the pommel and looking very sad.

One of the gentlemen went forth to assist her in alighting, but this she declined, "hoping she might have the pony a little longer."

"Oh, certainly, Harriot—all day if you like. But have you come back for your luncheon?"

"No, sir, thank you, I should *never* want to eat if I might ride all day; but —"

"But what brought you back so soon?"

"That ill-natured turnpike man, sir," she replied, with her eyes full of tears, "he would not let me go through because I had not a penny, although I assured him the first time I had one I would run up to the gate with it. And then I went to ask my mother for the money, but she does not like to give it, and so, sir—and therefore —"

And there sat the poor, innocent girl, with burning cheeks drying up her tears, her feelings divided between the shame of making her demand, and the grief of relinquishing her ride. Her want was soon supplied, and in future the pony, skirt, and turnpike



money formed the loan together from the friends, whose opinion of Mrs. Entwisle's justice to her child was not much increased by the adventure.

One class of sufferers in Stafford excited her pity more than any other, and in walking with her patronesses they often gave her the means of evincing it. The poor prisoners confined in the gaol for small debts had a basket suspended from a window to gather any passing contribution from the charitable, and Harriot Mellon, who had known some of the evils of poverty, had a dreadful horror that persons should be incarcerated for debts which might have resulted from misfortune or the profligacy of others. The power of putting a contribution into "the poor debtors' basket" was a great delight to her, and her friends used to allow their donations to pass through Miss Mellon's hands. It is related that when she first took a benefit at Stafford she stipulated with her mother that she must retain a certain sum to contribute to her "poor dear old debtors."

Charity was also a leading virtue in the character of Mrs. Entwisle, although at seeming variance with much of her treatment towards her daughter; and from the time they began to rise in the least degree above pecuniary difficulties, she displayed this exquisite feminine quality, in every way within her limited means—giving personal attendance to the

sick, where she had no other offering to make ; and when some kind patron would send her a Christmas or Easter present in money, a portion of it always was devoted to the purchase of common clothing for infants, or to materials for a dinner to indigent persons in her parish. The almost boundless spirit of charity possessed by the Duchess of St. Albans, therefore, was instilled from her childhood by the admirable example of her singular but warm-hearted parent.

In connexion with the foregoing may be added here, that immediately when Miss Mellon, as a London actress, could command sufficient money, she wrote to her friends, the bankers at Stafford (whose family state the circumstance) requesting them to undertake, at her expense, the distribution, at Christmas, of an ample quantity of beef, plum-pudding, vegetables, bread, ale, &c., to all the prisoners in the gaol of Stafford. She made likewise numerous private presents from her own knowledge of the inhabitants ; and had distributions of coals, blankets, and clothing among the poor there. All these were continued every season.

The town of Stafford is remarkably quiet and dull even for a provincial place, the influx of strangers being comparatively small ; and there would be nothing to interrupt the monotony, if it were not for the races.

These take place in October, and during the week it would seem as if the neighbourhood was enlivened by magical power. This is the great event for dramatic speculation there, and accordingly the theatre is then always opened.

The two members, Mr. Sheridan and the Honourable E. Monckton, were appointed stewards of the races in 1794; and went down to Stafford in October to attend their sporting duties.

Mr. Stanton, of course, brought his dramatic company to open the theatre; and, as was customary, the stewards of the races bespoke a play. This was the gala night, and all the gay world attended; the members accompanying the two families of Williamson and Wright.

The play was "The Belle's Stratagem;" the farce, "The Romp;" and Harriot Mellon, not then quite seventeen, had the nervous ordeal of playing before the arbiter of London theatricals.

Mr. Sheridan expressed himself greatly pleased with her talent, and as he was surrounded by her best friends, they spoke most warmly in favour of her disposition, conduct, and industry.

He said "it was a pity her talents were confined to so small a theatre;" and Mr. Wright instantly urged him to engage her for Drury Lane; to which the other replied, "He would think of it, and it should be done when he went to town."

The kind advocates of Harriot Mellon knew Mr. Sheridan too well to attach any value to a mere promise. However, the next evening the Misses Williamson invited him to meet their *protégée* at tea; and, after some professional discussion, Miss Mellon received a confirmation, in his positive promise, of an engagement for Drury Lane when he returned to London.

In complimenting her on her accurate mode of speaking, he inquired how she had been educated?—and when she ingenuously told him that her studies had been confined to her own language, he made the gratifying and well-remembered reply, “There was no occasion for any other, as I never heard a more elegant or accurate diction on or off the stage.”

Thus making her happy at the moderate expense of a compliment and a promise, he departed, after his week of acting popularity. Mrs. Entwisle was enraptured, and saw visions of benefits and coronets. Mr. Entwisle dreamt of the bliss of perfect idleness; and as for Harriot, she was not sane enough even to think or dream! She did nothing but watch the post which was to bring news of the engagement. But all her friends doubted whether their volatile member would give the matter a second thought; and they were right; he was in too great pecuniary difficulties.

In the midst of this "hope deferred," Harriot Mellon took her benefit, which was a profitable one, amounting to upwards of fifty pounds, including presents; but over this she had no command, beyond receiving some clothes, purchased by her mother, and the sum she insisted on putting into the debtors' box, which her mother superstitiously thought it would be unlucky to deny her.

The close of this year was the last of her acting with the Stafford company; and on the final night of their performance there, she made her farewell curtsy as the chambermaid, in O'Keefe's farce of "The Dead Alive."

Before leaving Stafford with the company, she went in despair to Mr. Wright, entreating he would remind Mr. Sheridan of the forgotten promise. This constant friend complied with her request, and received from Mr. Sheridan a complimentary answer, stating his opinion that "it was scarcely worth while for a lady of Miss Mellon's talent to appear towards the close of a season which the manager intended should be a short one; but when they were about to reopen the house he trusted to hear again from her," &c., &c.

This diplomatic, evasive reply was more satisfactory to Miss Mellon than to her less sanguine counsellor; however, they were obliged to wait for another opportunity.

The winter had been very severe, and the poor of Stafford suffered such misery that a committee was formed for their relief, and some gentlemen proposed having an amateur play for charitable purposes. Accordingly, on the 10th of June, 1795, they performed "The Road to Ruin," *Goldfinch*, by Captain Heywood—*Jacob*, by Mr. Woolwich, amateurs—the other characters by Mr. Stanton's company.

Miss Mellon played *Sophia*, whose school-girl's spirits were admirably represented by her own buoyant gaiety. It was a favourite character with her audience, and the rounds of applause she received (as stated by those who remember her attractive appearance on the charity night) seemed given with a feeling that it might be the last opportunity they would have of complimenting the clever young creature who had grown up among them.

Strange to say, among her numerous admirers at Stafford, all her confidantes assert positively that she had no preference for anyone. She was said to have the best line of characters given to her in consequence of the attachment of the manager's son; but if such were his feeling it was unreturned by her. Indeed, the terror felt by this poor girl respecting her mother's violence always crushed the romantic portion of her nature; and Mrs. Entwisle was a perfect Argus in her own family; so

that Miss Mellon *dared* not have liked anyone without her approbation !

About this time she formed an intimacy with a young person (at the house of a country patron) whose father kept mills in the country. This new friend was extremely anxious to have Harriot staying with her at "the cottage near the mill ;" and accordingly, when the acting season was over, the latter accepted the invitation. Great was her delight, after being used to smoky lodgings and confined air, to have a pretty rural bed-chamber, with snowy curtains, and the windows half hidden with woodbine and clematis. They walked to church through flowery lanes, and were perfectly good friends for two or three days ; until the miller's landlord, with his friend (a pair of London dandies), called to see them, or rather, to see the new guest.

The miller hurried up to Miss Mellon's door, telling her of the great honour the young gentlemen conferred in coming to visit her, and that she must make haste down directly. But the careful Mrs. Entwisle had lectured her daughter so well, and the kind banker's family at Stafford were so particular in their injunctions, that Miss Harriot would not go down. A second message came by the miller's daughter, but the young actress was inexorable, saying, "it was an insult for men of superior rank



thus to suppose she was to go at their bidding, to be stared at without respect."

The visitors went away ; and the miller, alarmed at his landlord being offended, gave poor Harriot as severe a scolding as ever she received at home ; and even her young friend joined against her—taunting her with the airs of an unknown actress, in not feeling proud of anyone's notice. So poor Harriot Mellon went to bed in tears.

The estates adjoining those of the mill belonged to a Mr. Jervis, an uncle to the great admiral, Sir John Jervis, afterwards Lord St. Vincent. Mr. Jervis was a magistrate, and had such a dislike to the drama that he never would grant a license for theatrical performance within his jurisdiction. It was at his house that the miller's young landlord was staying on a visit at this time.

For the magistrate's severe judgment on the following morning the miller related the impertinence of the strolling player girl, hoping his worship would apologize to the landlord in his tenant's name.

The old gentleman said that probably her refusal at first was all artfulness, in order to induce the young men to return. But the miller replied, that "it was worse than art, it was obstinacy ; for they had pressed her to change her mind, and she would not, so he was going to send her home in a cart that afternoon."

Mr. Jervis said, "So a pretty player girl is really

modest enough to dislike insulting admiration. Go home and tell her that I shall call upon her to-day, and Mrs Jervis will accompany me."

Nothing could exceed the surprise at the mill respecting the turn affairs were taking ; but they saw it was their best policy to make friends again with their young guest ; and by the time that squire Jervis and his lady arrived, Miss Mellon had forgotten her grievances, and was all sunshine.

The strangers closely questioned her motives and general habits, which must have been satisfactory, for the old lady said, "Instead of your going home this afternoon, Mr. Jervis and I wish you to come and stay a little at our house, to show our neighbours that we are not prejudiced against *all* people of your profession."

Who now so happy as merry Harriot Mellon, except her ambitious mother ! who, on hearing the story afterwards, was fully sensible of the difference between visiting a squire and a miller.

The amiable old pair took a great fancy to the artless, animated Miss Mellon, or, as she was always called there, "Little Harriot the player." She managed so well as to remove the prejudice of the magistrate ; and actually, by her ingenuous grace, wheedled him into granting a license for the obnoxious performances, besides patronizing them afterwards.

Whenever she was in their neighbourhood these

strangely-acquired friends always honoured her with an invitation to make their house her temporary home; but the poor old lady at last became bed-ridden, and her husband died suddenly of apoplexy about the time Miss Mellon came to London.

She heard afterwards there was a sketch of a will found in his writing, in which was a list of names for bequests, without the sums being inserted: among these were—"To little Harriot the player girl."\*

It has been frequently asserted that Miss Mellon was engaged by Mr. Sheridan in 1793, and appeared during that year at Drury Lane. These statements are perfectly erroneous. In the first place, there was no theatre open at Drury Lane in 1793. The old house had been pulled down, as Suett said, "to prevent the unpleasantness of its coming down of its own accord;" and the immense new theatre, afterwards destroyed by fire, was not opened until March 12th, 1794.

As the former Drury Lane company was obliged to be removed to the Haymarket, from 1792 to 1794, the establishment was too uncertain and irregular for the managers to increase the confusion

\* Miss Mellon was more fortunate regarding the testamentary kindness of some of her other friends of early years; several of these, even in comparatively humble grade, bequeathed to their young favourite some trifling testimonial of their former regard; which she received at different periods, long after she had left the provincial circuit.

and trouble by the engagement of *débutantes*; and there were no additions made to their number. These erroneous statements have probably arisen from a book written by Wewitzer in his old age, entitled "*Dramatic Chronology*," professing to record first appearances, and other theatrical events, during a long course of years. In order to save himself the trouble of research, the work was compiled chiefly from hearsay; some of his authorities forgot dates; others did not choose to remember them; many wilfully misled him; and, respecting *first appearances* (of all things proverbially deceitful), it is well known that he used to ask his favourites "What character would you like to have named as your first?" This valueless work, which often misleads those who are disinclined to troublesome research, states that Miss Mellon appeared as Lydia Languish in 1793. Yet in another book the same author names 1795. The former was done to make her appear older than she really was, in the hope of annoying her, for having refused to lend him money when she could not afford it, in consequence of her mother having a building mania at Cheltenham, and borrowing all her daughter's earnings.

During the spring of 1795, Miss Mellon still went on Mr. Stanton's circuit, though earnestly watching the affairs of Drury Lane. The season there concluded on the 22nd May; and Mr. Wright, true to his promise, a short time afterwards again addressed

Mr. Sheridan, regarding the hopes of an engagement which had been held out to the good little *protégée* of Stafford.

The novelty of the great theatre, which had filled it for one season, could not extend to the next; therefore it was deemed advisable to select some clever *débutantes*, and fortunately Mr. Wright's letter arrived just in time to remind Mr. Sheridan of Miss Mellon.

The reply contained a promise of engagement for her appearance in the ensuing September, provided her talent answered his expectation on further examination.

The Entwisle party were at Bridgenorth when Mr. Wright received this important intelligence; but Harriot was invited to Stafford to see a grand *assaut d'armes* given at the Town-hall by the Chevalier d'Eon; and then she learned the delightful intelligence of her chance of engagement in London.

Her grateful remembrance of the disinterested kindness shown by this excellent family used often to affect her to tears, even in later years. When she had the means of keeping a house worthy to receive those she so much valued, they were frequently her guests, and continued so during the lifetime of Mr. Coutts, until increase of years deprived them of the inclination to move from home. Her affection ex-

tended to the generation not yet born when she was at Stafford ; many who are still young remember the dress-frocks and enormous dolls constantly sent from Miss Mellon, which formed their joys of early days.

After the knowledge of her London prospects, Miss Mellon could not settle herself to her former career ; and, indeed, so short a time would intervene before the opening of Drury Lane, that the Entwistles thought it desirable to go at once to London, and effect all their arrangements. There had been some money saved from Harriot's benefits against this anticipated event, so they would be spared from any immediate pecuniary difficulty.

When Miss Mellon went to take farewell of her best friends, Mr. Wright, sen., with a care almost paternal, gave her a small sum of money for her own use, and uttered the gratifying prophetic words (remembered by his descendants), " Farewell, Harriot ; Heaven bless you, child. If you conduct yourself as well as you have done ever since you have been known to our family, I shall see or hear of you riding in your own carriage ! "

## CHAPTER VI.

London—She waits upon Sheridan—His appearance and character—His oblivion of the promise made—Lodgings in London—Anecdote of a hackney-coachman—Removal to meaner lodgings—Embarrassments—State of wardrobe—Sheridan at last fulfils his promise—Interview—Engagement—*Début* as Lydia Languish—Michaelmas goose.

AFTER having seen the humble, respectable, and gradually rising career of Miss Mellon during her provincial life, we have now to trace the more anxious period from her *début* in London.

The family party reached the metropolis in June, without friend or acquaintance, trusting solely to the promise of a manager almost unknown to them, and with a very slender stock of money to support them, in case of any delay respecting an engagement.

The theatre had closed during the preceding month, therefore they considered that Mr. Sheridan was likely to be disengaged, and able at once to inform



them of his decision. Accordingly, Miss Mellon, accompanied to the door by her mother, waited on him the day succeeding her arrival, to state the hopes which had brought her to London. After much hesitation, she was received by the great manager in the most slovenly of morning costumes, unshaven, and bearing the exhausted, dull look of the over-night's conviviality.

The wit of R. Brinsley Sheridan, Moore clearly proves, was frequently "borrowed plumage" from others, or else studiously planned in advance; he says, "It is certain that even his *bons mots* in society were not made at the moment; but that frequently, like a skilful priest, he had prepared 'the miracle of the moment' beforehand!"

Convivial wit, however, genuine or borrowed, often dazzles the world into blindness towards defects; yet when we consider that his character displayed, glaringly on its surface, a frequent habit of inebriety, a want of strict principle to defray just debts (and to escape which he would condescend to any paltry trick or subterfuge); a carelessness as to falsely making use of, or betraying, his best friends to serve the purpose of the moment; a continual habit of raising the hopes of others by hollow promises, without a power of fulfilling them; and an indifference for truth, which made him the selected secondary aid in an act which will go down a sad

history to posterity;\*—when we recollect these points in his character, our moral judgment must diminish the enthusiastic admiration our literary taste would entertain for the author of the “School for Scandal”—the finest comedy in our language.

Mr. Sheridan had not only forgotten his promise to Mr. Wright, but even Miss Mellon’s name and appearance ; nor was it until the production of his own letter to Mr. Wright (in which he had desired Miss Mellon to come to London), that he could recall any recollection of the circumstance.

He then became prodigal of fine speeches to the mortified young creature, who was nearly fainting from this her first experience of worldly sincerity. He praised her mode of speaking, her effective personal appearance for her profession, and sent her away with an indefinite promise about “keeping her in his mind,” which she could not very clearly understand, nor, perhaps, had he any intention that she should !

On Miss Mellon rejoining Mrs. Entwisle, the latter overwhelmed her with reproaches for “not having *made* Mr. Sheridan give her an engagement for the opening season !” and, on the next day, the matron resolved to try her own skill for her daughter.

\* The well-known part which he took in the proceedings in Parliament regarding the Prince of Wales’s marriage with Mrs. Fitzherbert must be known to all.

But the diplomacy of the manager (whom Mrs. Gore has lately defined as "*the arch master of finesse!*") far exceeded the arts of his untutored countrywoman; and she returned home from her fruitless errand, saying, "I saw he was telling me lies all the time, yet I could not catch him out with a direct one!"

The proverb of "fair words cost nothing" (which must have originated in Ireland) seems to have been Mr. Sheridan's motto; for instead of stating at once the unwelcome truth, that "there was no vacancy for another actress at Drury Lane," *he kept these poor people in uncertainty during three months*, by his unmeaning promises, thereby preventing them from returning to the country, or accepting engagements from minor companies.

At first they had taken lodgings near the Strand, in order to have a respectable address for the manager's expected communications; but as their means gradually melted, the provident Mrs. Entwisle considered the situation to be too dear, and accordingly they removed to a small house in New Street—of which more hereafter.

The following circumstance of genuine country simplicity occurred during their temporary stay in the Strand:—On the second day after their arrival, while Mrs. Entwisle had found her diplomacy overmatched by the senatorial manager, Harriot Mellon,

who was enchanted with the little "snatch" of the London sights which she had obtained on the preceding day, could not resist violating her mother's strict injunction as to staying at home; she resolved to venture out, and walk on in a straight line for a short distance, when she would return, ere her watchful guardian's mission was over.

She set forth towards the city, to enjoy a repetition of the preceding day's wonder; and walked on, unconscious of distance or time, until she arrived at a large place with pillars, and having statues of kings and queens (which she afterwards discovered was the Royal Exchange), and there she began to feel very weary. But the magic city seemed even to provide for her wishes in anticipation; for no sooner did she experience fatigue, than a kind old gentleman, with a bunch of hay in his hand, inquired, "Did she want a coach?" This was the very thing she required, enabling her to explore further, and at the same time repose herself; so she told the old coachman he was to "drive her all over London, and then bring her home." "La' love ye, miss," said the man, "that would cost ye a sight of money." "But look here, sir," said she, producing her purse, "I have a shilling to pay you." The good-tempered old Jehu, wondering at her simplicity, said, "Ah, miss, I can only set you down a quarter of the way home for that money; but get in, and we'll see about

it." To her infinite delight, she was established in a jingling old carriage, whence, with the windows down, she glanced at the bright shops as it hurried past, until the vehicle stopped, and the driver announced that he had exceeded the shilling fare. What was she to do? Fatigued, without money, and (worst of all) not having as yet seen enough of beautiful London, she inquired, with tears in her eyes, "Would not dear old Mr. Coachman put her on just another street?" Having ascertained that she had no further means of paying, and was but just arrived in London, the kind-hearted man, shaking up his multitudinous capes, said, "Well, then, sit still, and don't cry, my dear; bless your pretty face; I've got daughters myself, and I'd rather drive you half over Lunnun than leave 'e to find your way alone!" And he actually drove her the entire distance to her own home, saying, as he let her out, "This is a bad job, but I must take it out of another fare. Now don't you go out by y'rself never no more in Lunnun, 'cause you won't find many such fools as me."

Miss Mellon used to relate this with great pleasure, adding, "You may have heard of individuals leaving a fortune to persons they only met travelling; but did you ever before hear of anything equal to my dear hackney-coachman relinquishing his fare through good feeling?"

Mrs. Entwisle having discovered the ruinous expense of furnished lodgings, for poor people, resolved to take part of a cheap unfurnished house ere their little stock of money was exhausted; and to purchase with it the few articles of furniture they would require.

The cottage, selected through economy, was in New Street, near the present Surrey Zoological Gardens, upwards of three miles from the theatres, the neighbourhood of Drury Lane being at that time very expensive; for Tavistock Street had as yet some of the fashion remaining, which made it the Bond Street of some sixty years back.

Saint George's Fields, on the contrary, were then almost a wild, with great ponds of water, where cockney sportsmen sought snipe in winter, as they used likewise in "the Five Fields," which have since been metamorphosed into Belgrave and Eaton Squares, then a dismal swamp; while mounds of earth and stagnant pools existed where the Blue School and New Bethlem have been since erected. The immediate vicinity of the Surrey Theatre was a receptacle for itinerant showmen in winter, and bird-fanciers and dog-sellers in summer; so that the necessity of passing through such a "cordon" (which was anything but a "*cordon sanitaire!*") occasioned the rents to be exceedingly low: that, together with taxes, of the house of which Mrs.

Entwistle hired a part, being within £10 per annum. It was next door to a shop, occupied then, as now, by a baker, and was a miserably small, inconvenient place.

Miss Mellon, however, did not think it either miserable or ill furnished; for it was the first "place with furniture of their own" she had ever inhabited, and it consequently seemed to her a very high degree of respectability.

This rise in worldly grandeur made her feel any sort of slight more bitterly; and in after days, when arrayed in velvet and reclining in splendour, she used laughingly to relate the mortifications which almost always attended her Sunday walks with her mother.

On fine Sunday afternoons it was the custom for very well-dressed people to walk in the mall of St. James's Park; and when Mrs. Entwistle and her Harriot had been to church, they used to set forth on their three miles' journey to reach this promenade.

Miss Mellon used to describe that they were then in mourning for Mr. Entwistle's brother; and as cheap black becomes "shabby" much sooner than colours, it may be supposed that all the beauty of the future duchess did not prevent her dress from being rather dowdy.

The young men used to look under her bonnet with unrestrained expressions of impertinent admiration, notwithstanding the Medusa-looks which



her mother assumed to awe them. The females, envious, perhaps, of the brilliant country belle, with her bright eyes and rosy complexion, used to laugh and sneer aloud at "such rusty black silk gowns," or "the poor creatures' cotton stockings," or "bonnets such as had been worn two years ago!"

Miss Mellon used to be quite disheartened at the satire attracted by their "best dresses;" and with the offended dignity of a "householder," she would make her mother return to their little Surrey cage (with its sitting-room about two yards square, holding a table and three rush-chairs only), and, in a fever of vexation, she would burst out crying, and say, "Perhaps those impudent people have not *a nice place with furniture of their own* like ours!"

The summer rolled on, and the heart-sick Miss Mellon, fretting through "hope deferred," after having applied to Mr. Sheridan as often as she dared without offence, began to feel that they had acted foolishly in relying on the promises of a stranger, and that the wisest plan would be to sell off their valuable "table and three chairs," and return to the kind family of the Stantons, to rejoin the theatrical company.

Mrs. Entwisle, however, always persevering, tried one more chance, by having a letter written to Mr. Wright at Stafford, stating their position. He instantly wrote impressively to remind Mr.

Sheridan of the promised engagement, which had tempted the poor people to give up their livelihood; and so effectual was his remonstrance, that the manager instantly wrote to desire Miss Mellon would call on him. With admirable coolness he told her that a young actress having seceded from the company, Miss Mellon had been always "kept in his mind," as he had formerly said, and had now a chance of taking the absent lady's place; and as a specimen of her declamation, he requested her to read the scenes of *Lydia Languish* and *Mrs. Malaprop* aloud, from his own play of "The Rivals."

She felt greatly frightened, and answered, with the naïve, unaffected manner which she retained through life, "I *dare* not, sir, for my life! I would rather read it to all England. Suppose, sir, you did me the honour of reading it to me?"

There was something so unassuming and child-like in the way she made this daring request, that the manager entered into the oddity of the matter, and read nearly the whole play to his delighted young auditor. She became so identified with the drama, that she forgot all dread of the author, and, on his request, she read the scenes of *Lydia* and her Aunt with so much spirit, that Mr. Sheridan "applauded" repeatedly, told her she could play either character, and gave her an engagement!

By this time the company were coming back from

the provinces, and there were several private meetings of performers at the theatre, which Miss Mellon having received permission to join, never failed to attend. Mr. Sheridan having told her she should make her *début* in "The Rivals," but that he had not decided whether as Lydia or Mrs. Malaprop, she studied it continually; Mrs. Entwisle, of course, giving her own high-tragedy conception of each character as the model.

She always accompanied her daughter to the rehearsals, waited at the theatre, and went home with her. When the acting season commenced, they had the double journey to the evening performances also; so that, for a length of time, Miss Mellon and her mother walked at least twelve miles each day; which, perhaps, was useful in maintaining the fine health which was natural to both.

The house opened on the 16th September, and Miss Mellon went on the stage to join in the national anthem.

"The Rivals" was produced after a few rehearsals, and the *début* announced as "Lydia Languish by a young lady, her first appearance."

She was exceedingly alarmed and nervous, so that her performance was very inferior to her rehearsals, or the spirited reading to the author; but the following criticism from the leading dramatic paper of the day seems not unfavourable:—

“ ‘ The Rivals ’ was performed last night, with a new actress as Lydia Languish. The lady, whose name is said to be Melling, or Millen, was greatly agitated. Her appearance is strikingly handsome, her voice musical, her action graceful, when not checked by fear ; and there were some tones of archness at times, which practice may increase ; so it would be unfair to call last night a failure, though she did not succeed.”

After this rather feeble first appearance, she and Mr. Sheridan thought it desirable that some time should elapse, for her to become acquainted with the size and extent of the house, by joining in choruses, &c., ere she tried a prominent character ; and to this plan they adhered until October.

On Michaelmas-day the country family felt the absence of the customary gift which some of their farming friends were always sure to send them hitherto ; and Miss Mellon’s salary of thirty shillings per week certainly would not admit of any such dainty being purchased.

Mrs. Entwisle had brought her up with the firm belief in the necessity of complying with the superstitious customs attached to certain days, the omission of which would infallibly be followed by ill luck ; and therefore, the Christmas mince-pie, Shrove-Tuesday pancakes, Easter tansy-pudding, or Michaelmas-goose, must be tasted, though in

ever so small a quantity, nay, even though disagreeable to the partaker, as was her own case respecting the Michaelmas dainty. An anecdote regarding the latter has been sent us by an individual who recollects her in New Street. To him she regretted bitterly that, on her first metropolitan 29th of September, she should not be able to purchase a goose, for the sake of tasting a small portion to bring good luck. He adds, that the girlish delight she felt was excessive, on being informed that at some cook-shop near Drury Lane she might purchase even *one quarter*, from the dish she only desired for its consequent good fortune. The little portion was accordingly procured, and Miss Mellon and her relatives were quite satisfied in having thus fulfilled a superstitious duty at the appointed season.

It must be admitted, even by us “doubters” concerning luck, that, if we are to judge by the event, Miss Mellon’s system of tempting the smiles of Dame Fortune was more successful than any which “reasoning people” can recommend !

## CHAPTER VII.

Performers at Drury Lane in 1795—Appearance of the house—  
Lodoiska—Characters played by Miss Mellon—Hair dresser  
—Plays Miss Farren's and Mrs. Jordan's characters—Mr.  
Braham's first appearance at Drury Lane—Opera rehearsal—  
Personal appearance—Reminiscences of a contemporary actor  
—Miss Farren—Earl of Derby—Anecdotes.

MISS MELLON first appeared at Drury Lane on the 17th of September, 1795. In compliance with the opinion of some experienced theatrical collectors, the dramatic history of each year will be given without interruption, in order to show the progressive improvement in her cast of characters. To prove the difficulty of obtaining a new or important part by a *débutante* totally without interest, it will be sufficient to give the following names of established favourites, extracted from the bills of

performance during Miss Mellon's first London season.

Mrs. Siddons	Miss Farren	Signora Storace
Mrs. Jordan	Miss Collins	Miss Pope
Mrs. Crouch	Miss Leak	Miss Bramwell
Mrs. Bland	Miss Redhead	Miss Heard
Miss De Camp	Mrs. Goodall	Mrs. Kemble
Mrs. Powell	Mrs. Booth	Mrs. Hopkins

Thus there were four or five first-rate actresses for every line of character in this unrivalled company, of which the principal actors were —

Messrs. Kemble	Kelly	Suett
C. Kemble	Bensley	Bannister, jun.
Braham	Waldron	Dignum
Wroughton	Burton	Sedgwick
Palmer	King	Baddely
Barrymore	Bannister	Dodd
Ackin	Benson	Packer
Moody	Caulfield	Wewitzer
Hollingsworth	Maddocks	Russell

Miss Mellon had never seen a theatre larger than the town-halls in which she had played during her provincial circuits; many of these did not exceed the dimensions of ordinary sitting-rooms; and the curtain just cleared from touching the actors' heads. What must have been her feelings on first treading the stage of "the wilderness," as Mrs. Siddons styled the enormous new Drury Lane, where the



mere opening for the curtain was forty-three feet wide and thirty-eight feet high, or nearly seven times the height of the performers? The diameter of the pit was fifty-five feet; the height to the ceiling fifty-seven feet; and there were seats altogether for 3,600 persons; so that on "a crush night" upwards of 5,000 persons might have been squeezed into this enormous pile. Miss Mellon used to say that, notwithstanding her unusual height, she felt herself "a mere shrimp" when the curtain was raised and she saw the multitude of faces before her!

The season opened with "First Love," and "No Song, No Supper;" previously to which pieces the company assembled on the stage to sing the national anthem, and Miss Mellon among them.

"Lodoiska," a musical romance of Mr. Kemble's, had been produced with great expense (as managers' pieces generally are); and, to give it effect, every person in the theatre, except the really principal performers, was expected to go on in some part, however trifling. Miss Mellon and Mrs. C. Kemble (then Miss De Camp) were among the captives in "Lodoiska" on the 1st of October, as stated by the books of Drury Lane; and the following is a literal copy of the first London play-bill in which Miss Mellon's name appeared:—

## THEATRE ROYAL, DRURY LANE.

This present Thursday, Oct. 1st, 1795,

Their Majesty's servants will act a comedy called the

## WHEEL OF FORTUNE.

Sir David Daw	...	...	Mr. R. Palmer.
Governor Tempest	...	...	Mr. King.
Mr. Penrddock	...	...	Mr. Kemble.
Mr. Woodville	...	...	Mr. Whitfield.
Mr. Sydenham	...	...	Mr. Palmer.
Captain Woodville	...	...	Mr. C. Kemble.
Weazle	...	...	Mr. Snett.
Servant to Woodville	...	...	Mr. Maddocks.
Officer	...	...	Mr. Phillimore.
Jenkins	...	...	Mr. Russell.
Coachman	...	...	Mr. Jones.
Cook	...	...	Mr. Banks.
Servant to Tempest	...	...	Mr. Webb.
Footmen—Messrs. Trueman, Cooke, Evans, Welsh.			
Mrs. Woodville	...	...	Mrs. Powell.
Emily Tempest	...	...	Miss Farren.
Dame Dunckly	...	...	Mrs. Mattocks.
Maid	...	...	Miss Tidswell.

To which will be added, for the first time this Season,

The Romance of

## LODOISKA.

The music composed and selected from Cherubini,  
Kreutzer, and Andreozzi, by

MR. STORACE.

Polanders.

Prince Lapanski	...	...	Mr. Aikin.
Count Floreski	...	...	Mr. Kelly.

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Baron Lovinski	...	...	Mr. Palmer.
Varbel	...	...	Mr. Suett.
Adolphus	...	...	Mr. Caulfield.
Gustavus	...	...	Mr. Trueman.
First page...	...	...	Master Welsh.
Second page	...	...	Master Gregson.
Princess Lodoiska	...	...	Mrs. Crouch.

Captives.

Miss Leak, Miss De Camp, Miss Miller, Miss Mellon,  
Mrs. Boimaison, &c.

Tartars.

Kera Khan	...	...	Mr. C. Kemble.
Thorak	...	...	Mr. Dignum.
Khor	...	...	Mr. Cooke.
Japhis	...	...	Mr. Bannister.
Tamuri	...	...	Mr. Banks.
Camazin	...	...	Mr. Boimaison.

The Horde.

Messrs. Danby, Maddocks, Phillimore, Welsh, Evans.

Boxes, 6*s.* ; second price, 3*s.* Pit, 3*s.* 6*d.* ; second price, 2*s.*  
Gallery, 2*s.* ; second price, 1*s.* Upper gallery, 1*s.* ; second  
price, 6*d.*

It is curious to observe the total absence of pre-  
tension and "large letters" in this bill.

In the present day it would appear that the  
dignity of a great actor requires his name to be in  
enormous type, and placed in a line by itself; but  
here we see Mr. Kemble was satisfied to appear in  
the same line and the same sized letter as Mr. King.

The captives in "*Lodoiska*" have nothing to do  
beyond running, in screaming terror, through the

flaming castle of Lovinski, when the Tartar horde attack it. But as actresses of such talent as Miss De Camp and Miss Leak also devoted themselves to the not very arduous task, Miss Mellon was in goodly society. Between October and the Christmas holidays they performed in "Lodoiska" eighteen times.

After appearing as a captive five times, Miss Mellon had a new part given to her, *Lady Godiva*, in O'Keefe's "Peeping Tom," when that farce was produced for the first time at Drury Lane, October 15th, by Mr. Colman's permission: it was thus cast—\*

Earl of Mercia	...	...	Mr. Caulfield.
Mayor of Coventry	...	...	Mr. Watkins.
Count Lewis	...	...	Mr. Trueman.
Harold	...	...	Mr. Dignum.
Crazy	...	...	Mr. Suett.
Peeping Tom	...	...	Mr. Bannister, jun.
Lady Godiva	...	...	Miss Mellon.
Emma	...	...	Miss De Camp.
Mayoress	...	...	Mrs. Hopkins.
Maid	...	...	Mrs. Bland.

\* This piece was played eight times before Christmas. On the 30th, Miss Mellon is named as one of the chorus singers in Storace's opera of the "Cherokee," and on the 11th November, among those of the "Pirates." On the 14th, she played *Clara* in the "Adopted Child," a part which had been Miss Leak's; and on the 26th, *Lucy* in the "Recruiting Officer." On the 25th, "Alexander the Great" was performed, in which Mr. Kemble, Mr. C. Kemble, and Mrs. Siddons sustained the principal parts.

On the 1st December, Miss Mellon played *Maria* in the “Spoiled Child;” the 3rd, *Lucy* in the “Country Girl;” the 7th, *Miss La Blonde* in the “Romp;” and on the 14th, *Lucy* in the “Devil to Pay.” As the inimitable Mrs. Jordan played her four best characters in these pieces, Miss Mellon had an opportunity of studying how they should be represented; and so enchanted and engrossed was she by the delightful actress before her, that she used to declare her own acting was merely mechanical, her interest being diverted from her own characters; and she would have played all the other parts together, rather than have lost one word of Mrs. Jordan’s.

On the 10th, she sang in the “Surrender of Calais;” on the 18th, played *Blanch* in “King John;” and on the 30th, *Peggy* in “The Suicide.”

“Twelfth Night” was performed on the 12th January, 1796; and it must be recollected that Mr. Kemble, as manager, was especially careful in getting up Shakspeare with the best cast the theatre could command.

The character of *Maria* is of considerable importance, and had been previously played by Miss De Camp. To Miss Mellon’s astonishment and

The choruses were very well filled; in them were Mrs. Bland, Miss De Camp, Miss Mellon, Miss Leak, Miss Arne, Mrs. Maddocks, Mrs. Boimaison, Miss Chatterly, and many other good vocalists.

delight she found her own name as the representative of Maria, Miss De Camp having taken *Olivia*; Mrs. Jordan was the *Viola*.

At this period, Miss Mellon could not afford to employ a hairdresser constantly; and with her mother's assistance she easily arranged her beautiful hair; but it was a sort of professional whim of hers that neither of them were worthy to dress the hair of a Shakspearian character; therefore, she always treated herself to a *coiffeur* whenever it was her good fortune to receive one of these "honourable distinctions," although it must have fallen heavily on a salary of thirty shillings a week.

On the 16th, she played *Miss Grantham* in "The Liar;" and on the 18th, a pantomime was produced entitled "Harlequin Captive, or the Magic Fire;" the characters are not named in the bills, but there are above twenty distinguished actresses enumerated in this piece. She first appeared before royalty on the 1st February. On the 9th, she played *Cleone* in "The Distressed Mother;" and on the 20th, in the "Shepherdess of Cheapside;" on the 27th February and 1st March, as *Lettuce* in the revival of "The Plain Dealer;" and on the 3rd, in the "Mountaineers."

Sheridan gave the first demonstration of the estimate he formed of her talent when the Trip to Scarborough was to be performed on the 5th March. The character of *Berinthia* had been played about a

fortnight previously by the elegant Miss Farren; that lady was now suffering from indisposition, and Mr. Sheridan, who cast this piece himself, bestowed Berinthia upon his new *débutante*, Miss Mellon, which she played with considerable success; and in after years it was a favourite character of hers.

*Lucy* in "The Devil to Pay" was represented by her on the 8th, and on the 12th, she sang in "The Iron Chest;"—on that memorable night which led to the author's more memorable preface (against Mr. Kemble), and which he afterwards vainly endeavoured to suppress.

Mrs. Jordan had performed *Amanthis* in "The Child of Nature" (one of her most charming efforts) on the 10th, and was announced to repeat it on the 14th; but being taken suddenly ill on the preceding day, the managers consulted as to the substitute best suited to take her place without long notice. It was decided that the *débutante* Miss Mellon had been so perfect in her hasty study to replace Miss Farren some eight days before, that she should be allowed to try Mrs. Jordan's character, under similar circumstances.

This was a great compliment to the young girl, who had scarcely had five months' experience of London acting and actors: particularly when it is considered what a list of comic actresses there were in that company, all likely to know the part better



than herself. She was nervous in undertaking it; and lest her wish to accommodate might be misinterpreted into presumption, she begged that an apology might head the bills of the performance. Accordingly, they commenced thus: "The public are most respectfully informed that, in consequence of the sudden indisposition of Mrs. Jordan, Miss Mellon will undertake the character of Amantis, and humbly solicits their indulgence."

The criticisms of the day give the best possible encomium on this performance, by saying that she in many points closely approached the celebrated original.

After its conclusion, the performers assembled round her with such kind congratulations that the agitated girl burst into tears, to their great surprise; for hitherto they had seen her the most laughter-loving person in the theatre. To conclude her little triumphs, it was understood that as she had succeeded so well in Miss Farren's character of Berinthia, she was to repeat it on the 17th, which she did with increased courage and animation.

On the 8th and 31st, she again appeared as *Lucy* in "The Devil to Pay;" the 19th and 28th, "The Iron Chest" was repeated. April 4th, the pantomime was performed for the thirty-sixth and last time. April 13th, in a new musical drama, called "The Smugglers," performed about ten nights, she played *Mar-*

gery. After the play, she was in "The Critic." May 4th, Mr. John Kemble was taken seriously ill. Had he read the announcement in the bill, its grammar might have been fatal to him :—" *The public* are respectfully informed that Mr. Charles Kemble will read the character of *Mahmoud*, and hopes for *your* indulgence."

May 6th, Miss Mellon advanced another step ; instead of her former character of *Miss La Blonde* in "The Romp," she played *Penelope*, which had been performed by the popular, handsome, and clever Miss De Camp. On the 23rd she had a part in a new three-act piece called "Celadon and Florimal ;" and in the revived "Gentle Shepherd" the character of *Jenny*.

The last night of the season, June 14th, she played Miss Grantham for a benefit (the proceeds to be divided among *eight* performers), and sung for the fifteenth time in the musical piece of "Mahmoud," which had been brought out on the 30th of April for the first appearance of Mr. Braham at Drury Lane.

At the rehearsal of this opera, an incident occurred, which was at first embarrassing to the novice, who was only making her way in her profession, surrounded by a company who were all experienced actors, and full of confidence. But the sequel, showing that Mr. Kemble undertook her defence, gave her courage and much gratification.

Mr. Kelly, who had been greatly annoyed that the

choruses were not (in his opinion) loud enough, found fault with several of the singers for their want of exertion ; and, among others, with Miss Mellon, saying “ he could not hear her ; and if ladies did not choose to sing above their breaths, they might as well sing over the music at home.”

Miss Mellon replied that “ she sang as loud as she could ; but she did not profess to be a fine vocalist.”

Mr. Kelly, who was sorry for having singled her out, replied that he did not allude particularly to her ; and so far that morning the matter rested.

A day or two passed, and still these unfortunate choruses were executed in such a faint way that Mr. Kelly was again angry, and decidedly out of temper ; and he insisted on hearing each singer separately, in one particular chorus. Now, although Miss Mellon could take parts in simple glees, she never affected to sing difficult concerted music ; and Kelly, in his plagiarisms from the Italian masters, about that time first introduced difficulties into his choruses. Miss Mellon, when it came to her turn, sang so very faintly that it appeared really as if it proceeded from unwillingness, if not from incapacity. Mr. Kelly was about to say something very severe, when John Kemble came to the rescue. “ Come, come, Mr. Kelly,” said he, “ Miss Mellon is never inattentive to her business, and it is not her fault if she be ‘ ill at these numbers ! ’ ”

A word from the stage manager was of course sufficient, and the matter dropped. As Mr. Braham made so great a sensation with the public, Miss Mellon had the mortification of singing these awkward choruses some forty or fifty nights. A glance at the theatrical advertisements in the papers of that time will show that she was as yet deemed of little importance ; as her name, though in the playbill, was seldom advertised.

Indeed, in a theatre where Mrs. Jordan, Miss Farren, Mrs. Goodall, Miss De Camp, Miss Leak, Miss Heard, and Mrs. Bland performed, little opportunity was likely to be accorded to a young actress, whose talents were unknown, until some necessity of the theatre called them forth.

A great favourite of the present day, who, about that time, first came out at Drury Lane, describes thus his early recollections of Miss Mellon's style and appearance. The definition seems so exactly like what many remember from subsequent years, that it is given without alteration :—" Miss Mellon was a remarkably handsome brunette, but did not look a bit like an actress. She was much more like one of the genuine beauties of a quiet village two hundred miles from town. It was, I suppose, this rusticity that made her for a long time unnoticed ; I don't mean unnoticed merely as an actress, for with our company she was of course prepared for

that, but unnoticed as a *beauty*. She had really more claim to that title than (two or three excepted) most actresses of the day. Miss Farren was then, despite the small-pox, the reigning toast; she was an elegant woman. Mrs. Jordan was in her bloom; she was a fascinating one. Mrs. Goodall was delightful; and Miss De Camp set half the young fellows mad; nay, Mrs. Bland was voted a charmer by many; the coarse *signora* had admirers; to say nothing of the majestic Siddons, to whom none dared express admiration; the Cleopatra looking Mrs. Powell, and that most graceful and lovely of all syrens, Mrs. Crouch. These ladies had each a style, you could classify them as divinities; but Miss Mellon was merely a country girl, blooming in complexion, with a very tall, fine figure, raven locks, ivory teeth, a cheek like a peach, and coral lips. All she put you in mind of was, a country road and a pillion! I cannot call to mind when I saw her first, which convinces me that she did not make any impression upon me at once. I must have met her at the call of the company previous to the opening in 1795. It happens in this, as in a hundred other cases, where persons have subsequently achieved celebrity, that one regrets not having paid more attention to their early efforts; but I had my own battle to fight at that time, and was more inclined to watch the master efforts of the great people, than to trouble

my head about novices. I remember her in Lady Godiva, because I went to the front to see Bannister (Jack), playing Peeping Tom. The lady has very little to do, and the part is generally given to some fine looking woman; I presume her personal appearance was the sole ground of the selection; there was no one in the theatre who could bring the requisite advantages, and would go on for so slight a part, except Miss Mellon. She was always a little inclined to *embonpoint*. I believe it was understood that she should play some of the secondary parts, formerly assigned to Miss De Camp and Mrs. Gibbs. Very little was expected from her, and she rather agreeably disappointed Kemble, who had no great opinion of new-comers. Miss De Camp increased in public favour so rapidly, that it was deemed inexpedient to send her on for any but important parts. Miss Mellon, therefore, had many characters which, though not exceedingly prominent, were better than she had probably expected. She was a good-humoured, pleasant creature in the theatre at that time, and mixed with this pleasantness a decision admirably calculated to repel any disagreeable attentions. This I remember she proved to old Dodd,\* who was (though a capital

\* Dodd was one of those whose vices and follies grow with their years; when young, he had no personal advantages; and, when advanced in life, was in expression feebly idiotic; yet he imagined himself an Adonis; and made desperate love to every woman who possessed the double charm of youth and beauty.



actor) a man of unbounded vanity, and of very indifferent character; and who received two or three severe checks from Kemble for his frivolities with regard to the younger actresses. Miss Mellon at once put an end to all annoyance, in a prompt and spirited manner, and she spoke aloud too. Everybody was pleased, except Dodd, who, I believe, never forgave it.

“Had there been anything very remarkable in attire or in manner about her, I think I should have noted it; for who that saw it forgets Dignum when he acted in full dress uniform and blue silk stockings? Every one remembers Munden in his early days, and Delfini, for they made themselves remarkable by their eccentricities; but Miss Mellon (save from her rustic good looks) had nothing peculiar to attract my attention.

“I recollect, on the reunion of the company after the vacation (I don’t know which vacation, though, perhaps, 96, 7, or 8, it was a general thing), hearing several actors and actresses speak of having met Miss Mellon in the provinces (for when Drury closed she went to other theatres for practice), and that at York or Liverpool she became a great favourite. Our great folks spoke very highly of her indeed—Bannister, Mrs. Crouch, and others; and she was often praised for her good-natured readiness to play for anyone in cases of illness,



&c. On these occasions (if very sudden) the higher performers would say, 'Miss Mellon can do it; I saw her play it very well at such a place.' These things made her very popular with the management, for she was indefatigable; and, after flaunting as the fine lady, in the absence of some greater actress, she returned to the secondary business she was accustomed to play with a good grace and good humour.

"Old Wewitzer was at this time her friend and adviser; but whether she knew him previously to her coming to Drury I don't know: I fancy he was a friend of the family; he knew her mother very well. Miss Heard was a great friend of hers; so were Miss Leak, Miss De Camp, and Mrs. Jordan, who were so situated in the theatre at that time that their kindness amounted to a sort of patronage.

"The only thing more that I can recall is, her asking leave to be at the wings on the night of the production of *Vortigern*. Kemble was very particular in keeping them clear; but on this occasion, and in her case, he relaxed somewhat of his severity. Everybody was on the *qui vive* to see this assumed Shakspearian play; and though Kemble had stamped it as a 'Fudge,' a vast number of us were of a different opinion, merely for the purpose of opposing the stage manager.

"When the uproar began, the sensation behind

the scenes was immense. Young Ireland, who was a dashing fellow, and who had attained great favour with the little people from his affability, had quite a party on his side. The play proceeded, and the riot was at its height; and this brings me to Miss Mellon. She turned as pale as death, trembled like an aspen leaf, and I really expected was about to faint. As she was by no means one of the fainting order, I set this down to her tenderness for the young author (or finder), but I was mistaken. She had never witnessed the condemnation of a play before; and she told me afterwards, that she expected, from the noise, that they would leap on the stage, demolish the scenery, &c., and perhaps (as they did a little time before in Ireland) act violently towards the performers. Her fears were not unnatural; for, some forty years ago, when a theatrical riot did occur, it was an appalling scene."

Miss Farren, who only played two seasons after Miss Mellon's appearance, was greatly admired by the young professional novice. The attachment of the Earl of Derby was then well known, and his intention declared of offering her his hand in case of the demise of the first countess. Miss Farren was therefore treated as if the aerial coronet was already on her brow. She was in very good private society before her marriage, however; and when the Duke of Richmond gave amateur theatricals, at his

house in Privy Gardens, Miss Farren was the principal director, by the request of numerous distinguished persons. The chief performers were, the Hon. Mrs. Damer, Lord Henry Fitzgerald, and the Earl of Derby. It is said that the proposal of his lordship was made in his quaint theatrical costume, with his face painted and smeared for a dress rehearsal.

An occurrence regarding Miss Farren's last season of playing would prove that, about the close of the last century, theatrical managers *really were* "*managers*" of the actors whom they engaged and paid; a degree of absolute power which is rather doubtful in these enlightened days, when the whims and tempers of the company are frequently more difficult to satisfy than the tastes of their patrons, the public.

Anyone who is conversant with modern theatrical affairs must be aware of a circumstance which occurred two or three years, since when a young actress, who was refused the gratification of some whim respecting a new part she had learnt, threw it up in anger; at the same time saying that "her successor should not benefit by *her* taste in costume," she destroyed, in the presence of the manager, the whole set of patterns and models of historical dresses which he had enabled her to procure, and which there was no time to replace. The end of the story

was, that, under the pressure of time, the manager had no alternative but to let the "hasty" young lady have her way regarding the character.

It is also well known that, recently, a certain beautiful *danseuse* was so implacably offended with a manager respecting a peculiar costume, which her exquisite dancing had almost identified with herself, and which the manager had ventured to hint his wish that another lady might wear on some particular occasion, that she refused to appear again, obtained an accommodating physician's certificate of indisposition, and, in short, so completely upset the arrangements when too late for any substitution, that a compromise was respectfully tendered, and a promise that the celebrated garment should be held sacred to her own person from that day forth.

Miss Farren should have lived in those days of "liberty," for it would seem she possessed the spirit for their enjoyment. The year before her retirement the performance of "The Provoked Husband" was announced, Miss Farren to take her celebrated character of *Lady Townley*, in which her early success had been so great that, after her first appearance in it, the *débutante* had been engaged at both the great theatres. From that time, however, it would seem that the changes in the lady's fortunes were more rapid than the changes in the wardrobes supplied by the management;

and the future countess, on examining the dress intended for her, refused to wear it. Both parties were resolute: the managers denied her a new dress, the actress rejected the old one, and the play was suddenly advertised to be withdrawn.

Green-room gossip soon flies through the play-going portion of London. The cause of their disappointment became quickly known (perhaps intentionally) to the resolute spirits who govern the pit and gallery; and, on the night when the play should have been acted, a most tremendous riot took place in the house, in which severe rebukes and loud calls for Miss Farren predominated.

Some sort of apology was made for that lady, who fortunately was not among the performers; but the rioters insisted so resolutely on "The Provoked Husband" being played soon, that there was no peace until someone was sent on to announce its performance for a certain night.

Accordingly, on the appointed evening, the play was performed to a house crowded almost to suffocation by parties wishing to see who had conquered in the green-room. Miss Farren, notwithstanding her fame, her talents, and her prospects, had found the impossibility of contending against the management, which was supported by the public; and the admired favourite appeared in the despised satin

dress, in which she had to make many apologetic and deprecating movements to her angry audience ere they would allow her to proceed with one syllable of the play.

Miss Mellon being then just introduced to the principal green-room (through the amiability of Mrs. Siddons), very wisely thought it better to listen to the conversational style of the grand actresses than to indulge her own *bavarderie*; and a great penance this silence must have been to her. Accordingly, when Lord Derby and other theatrical noblemen would assemble round Miss Farren, Miss Mellon used to stand near this glass of fashion. The great lady was very partial to the rustic belle, and doubtless she derived much professional benefit from her intercourse with the most elegant actress on the stage, whose refined readings of *Lady Teazle* and the more elevated class of comedy are to this day quoted as beyond attainment. Lord Derby was a very singular-looking little man for a lover. Although at this time but forty-five, he looked fifteen years older. He had an excessively large head, surmounting his small, spare figure, and wore his hair tied in a long, thin pig-tail. This, with his attachment to short nankeen gaiters, made him an easily-recognized subject in the numerous caricatures of the day.

Miss Farren's conduct was always unexceptionable,

and after their marriage they lived most happily together.

Miss Mellon was one evening standing near the green-room fire, and, while waiting for the play to begin, she was humming some popular dance, and just tracing the steps unconsciously. She was roused by the voice of Miss Farren, whispering, "You happy girl, I would give worlds to be like you!"

Poor Miss Mellon, recollecting her thirty-shilling salary, thought she was ridiculed by "a lady with thirty guineas a week, who was to marry a lord;" and she replied, with some slight vexation, that "there certainly must be a vast deal to be envied in *her* position by one who commanded what she pleased!"

Pressing her hand kindly, Miss Farren's eyes became full of tears as she replied, "I cannot command such a *light heart* as prompted your little song!"



## CHAPTER VIII.

Engagement at Liverpool—Character of that Theatre—Success there—Aneedote and kindness of Mrs. Siddons—Benefit—Returns to London—Continued improvement—Love of flowers—Change of lodgings—Aneedote—Act of kindness—Jews' festivities—Novel footstool.

AFTER the success of Miss Mellon in London, which, though not very remarkable, was unexpected by her country friends in those days of superior comic actresses, she had proposals of engagement from several provincial managers, who, two years previously, would have refused an application from her. Such is the “stamp on the gold” affixed by even a short probation on the London boards. This is more especially the case at Liverpool, where the audiences require a continual succession of metropolitan performers, thereby increasing the difficulties of the manager in no trifling degree; for the Stars, being aware of the demand,

are proportionably particular and troublesome about their engagements.

Among those who wrote to offer Miss Mellon a short engagement between the London seasons, was Mr. Aikin, the Liverpool manager; and, as Lancashire was endeared to her from childish recollections, she accepted his proposal at once, as being also a step further in her profession than almost any other provincial engagement could have given her.

The Liverpool theatre was, at that time, conducted on principles different from those of any other provincial establishment; it was kept open for about three months in the summer season, commencing when Drury Lane and Covent Garden closed, and ending at the recommencement of their performances. The company consisted of London performers, none of whom were permitted to act until pledged to remain during the entire season. But this system, at first a source of great profit, became afterwards a trouble and expense unprecedented; as the London theatres sometimes varied in the periods of their opening or closing, the actors had to run away from Liverpool, or were unable to reach that place by the day appointed.

An attempt was made to imitate the plan of Tate Wilkinson, by having a provincial company. This the inhabitants of Liverpool resented warmly;

“London actors or none” was the universal cry; of which those ladies and gentlemen taking advantage, asked such salaries as alarmed the proprietors. To let in provincials by two and three at a time was the scheme that next suggested itself; and Mr. Kemble and Mrs. Siddons (as yet untried in London) were selected as the best actor and actress the provinces possessed. But they were each *hissed, hooted, and pelted* off the stage; and that not only for one or two nights, but consecutively for a month. Mrs. Siddons at length prevailed over ignorant clamour and senseless opposition; but the peerless Kemble was hissed, whenever he appeared, for one whole season! Even to this day a prejudice against country actors prevails there; and it is not at all uncommon to see seven or eight metropolitan actors in the same play in one night, at the Liverpool theatre.

In 1796, Miss Mellon arrived there with the Entwistles, on the 10th of June, taking lodgings at a hosier's; and on the 22nd made her appearance at the Theatre Royal, Liverpool, where she was destined afterwards to become so great a favourite. Her engagement was for the season at two pounds per week, and half a clear benefit; which were thought very handsome terms. She improved exceedingly here; and as she had “understudied” many principal characters whilst in town, she had

now an opportunity of essaying her powers in their representation. It was usual then (and is to a certain extent now) to retain, in the two royal theatres, an actress or two to study every character played by the principal performers, and especially in new pieces ; so that, in cases of illness affecting the greater one, a substitute should be prepared. Miss Mellon was thus not only minutely perfect in all the leading parts of the new plays, but had assiduously studied the business and points of such parts as were represented by Mrs. Jordan, Miss De Camp, Mrs. Goodall, Miss Farren, &c. Nor was this all : ardently loving her art, eternally in the theatre, she was actually able to repeat nearly entire plays ; and could tell the “ situations,” as they are termed, in every stock play of the time. The stage-manager found her an invaluable resource. She assisted him to cast the characters, described the costume and scenery of new pieces, which he had probably never seen at all, but which she had often witnessed during the (*then*) minute process of previous rehearsal.

Of course, Miss Mellon’s kindness could not be more appropriately repaid than by casting her such characters as she chose ; and as she was too wise to make any very unreasonable request, she might be said to have completely her own way in the theatre. In her performances here she had manifold advan-

tages ; perfect, long before the cast of the play had been put up in the green-room, she came to rehearsal as if she had played the part fifty times. Young, and with a quick ear, she had caught the tones of some of the original performers, but who had not been seen in plays presented for the first time at Liverpool ; she had therefore the place of the London favourite ; and it occurred more than once, that when the originals subsequently acted the parts there, they were deemed copiers or borrowers from Miss Mellon !

The following were Miss Mellon's characters at Liverpool in 1796 :—*Julia Faulkner*, in "The Way to Get Married ;" *Sophia*, in "The Road to Ruin ;" *Cowslip*, in "The Agreeable Surprise" twice ; *Ophelia*, in "Hamlet ;" *Priscilla Tomboy*, four times ; *Maria*, in "The School for Scandal ;" *Phœbe*, in "Rosina ;" *Fatima*, in "The Revenge ;" *Nancy Lovell*, in "The Suicide ;" *Hero*, in "Much Ado about Nothing ;" *Tilburina*, in "The Critic ;" *Rosina*, in "The Spanish Barber ;" *Estifania*, in "Rule a Wife ;" *Miss Grantham*, in "The Liar ;" *Roxalana*, in "The Sultan ;" *Cecilia*, in "Speculation ;" *Little Pickle* ; *Mariana*, in "The Dramatist ;" *Thisbe*, in "Crochet Lodge ;" *Joanna*, in "The Deserted Daughter ;" *Nancy*, in "Three Weeks after Marriage ;" *Cherry*, in "The Beaux' Stratagem ;" *Miss Woburn*, in "Every One has his

Fault ;" *Angelina*, in "Love makes a Man ;" *Madge*, in "Love in a Village ;" *Rosalind*, in "As you Like it ;" *Miss Tittup*, in "Bon Ton ;" *Miss Leeson*, in "The School for Wives ;" *Emmeline*, in "The Doldrums ;" *Maud*, in "Peeping Tom ;" *Louisa Dudley*, in "The West Indian ;" *Miss Lucy*, in "The Virgin Unmasked ;" *Flora*, in "The Wonder ;" *Sabina Rosni*, in "First Love ;" *Polly*, in "Polly Honeycomb ;" *The Page*, in "The Follies of a Day ;" *Fanny*, in "Lock and Key ;" *Clara*, in "The Masked Friend ;" *Lady Touchwood*, in "The Belle's Stratagem ;" *Fanny* ; *Joanna*, in "The Page ;" *Agnes*, in "The Mountaineers ;" *Lady Flippant*, in "Fashionable Levities ;" *Dorothy*, in "Heigho for a Husband ;" *Nell*, in "The Devil to Pay ;" *Annette*, in "Robin Hood ;" *Emily Tempest*, in "The Wheel of Fortune ;" *Sophia* ; *Annabel*, in "The Man in Ten Thousand ;" *Barbara*, in "Love and Money ;" *Mrs. Kitty*, in "High Life below Stairs ;" and *Miranda*, in "The Tempest."

On the 17th August she took her half-benefit, playing *Sabina Rosni*, in "First Love" (speaking the Address and Epilogue) ; *Polly*, in "Polly Honeycomb ;" and *The Page*, in "The Follies of a Day ;" introducing two songs. She realized £130 by this night, and about £25 by the engagement.

A greater honour than the theatrical engagement awaited Miss Mellon, in the flattering notice of Mrs.

Siddons, who was that summer at Liverpool. After the closing of the Drury Lane season, the latter had found the impossibility of obtaining any money from Mr. Sheridan, who was never very forward with the settlements; but this year, she afterwards mentioned to Miss Mellon, there was a slight coolness between him and herself, because she would neither give her credence nor her acting to Ireland's deception of "Vortigern." She was, therefore, obliged to make very hard terms with the provincial managers, to compensate for the London deficiencies; and, after acting a fortnight at Manchester, she arrived at Liverpool, at the same time as Miss Mellon. She played there a fortnight also, her splendid performance taking such an effect on the comic actress, that the latter lost all her night's rest, and was crying half the morning!

The following account of the distinguished kindness of Mrs. Siddons to the unknown Miss Mellon, who was more than twenty years her junior, is given on the indisputable authority of the individual who introduced the parties, himself an actor of great talent, and well known to Mrs. Siddons. His anecdote is in such a genuine form that his words are quoted literally :

"While I was engaged at the Liverpool Theatre, in 1796, Mrs. Siddons came down for a short time. I had the pleasure of knowing her intimately, from



my father having been in *her* father's company, and her son some time in mine, studying to become an actor. Mrs. Siddons said to me one morning at our rehearsal, 'There is a young woman here whom I am sure I have seen at Drury Lane.'

"I told her, 'It is Miss Mellon, who has just come out.'

"'She seems a nice, pretty young woman,' returned Mrs. Siddons, 'and I pity her situation in that hot-bed of iniquity, Drury Lane; it is almost impossible for a young, pretty, and unprotected female to escape. How did she conduct herself while with your father's company?'

"I replied, 'She conducted herself with the greatest propriety, although she had several temptations. I have never heard one word to her discredit.'

"'Nor have I,' said Mrs. Siddons, 'heard of anything in the least degree wrong in her conduct since being in London.'

"Mrs. Siddons then desired me to present Miss Mellon to her, who coloured highly at the honour, and looked very handsome in her bashfulness.

"Mrs. Siddons now took Miss Mellon by the hand, and, after a few kind encouraging words, led her forward among the company, and said—

"'Ladies and gentlemen,—I am told by one I know very well, that this young lady, for years in his

*father's company, conducted herself with the utmost propriety. I therefore introduce her as my young friend.'*

"This electrified the parties in the green-room, who had not looked for such a flattering distinction for the young actress; but of course they were all too glad to follow Mrs. Siddons in anything; and Miss Mellon was overwhelmed with attention.

"I heard afterwards from some members of Drury Lane that on the return of Mrs. Siddons and Miss Mellon to their duties in London for the succeeding season, the former paid her a similar compliment as at Liverpool, making the same statement regarding her excellent conduct in every company in which she had hitherto performed, and by thus bringing her forward under such advantageous circumstances, she was now in the first green-room, where her inferior salary did not entitle her to be without the recommendation of Mrs. Siddons.

"Several patrons of the drama and amateur frequenters of the green-room, I understand, were present on the occasion; among the number was Mr. Coutts, who was stated to have been all his life partial to theatrical society."

This statement is copied from the letter of one who certainly has not a favourable prejudice respecting Miss Mellon, for in the same communication he

dwells on some defects of her disposition. Hence the above striking testimony in favour of her virtuous conduct during the many years which, in provincial management, she must have passed under the *surveillance* of the gentleman's father, his family, and the members of their company, reflects great credit on his candour and on the demeanour of the poor player girl.

The notice of the queen of the drama, besides being flattering in the highest degree for the "young, pretty, unprotected girl" for whose good conduct she so amiably pledged herself, must have been also an unusual distinction from Mrs. Siddons, who, though represented to have been amiable and exemplary in the highest degree, was so deeply engrossed in the studies of her profession that her friends say her manner was always reserved and abstracted, her mind evidently preoccupied with study, and indifferent to the general current of life around her.

On the 20th September, 1796, Drury Lane opened with "The Prize," "The Child of Nature," and "The Devil to Pay," and in consequence of the absence of Mrs. Jordan, who was not to appear until November, Miss Mellon had again the honour of taking two of her characters—*Amanthis* in the second piece and *Nell* in the third. That incomparable comedian had so completely identified herself with both that no

innovation was ever attempted or expected. The critics, therefore, in praising Miss Mellon's attention and progress in her profession say, "She came very close in several points to her admirable original."

This seems to have been a season of modest demands on the theatrical treasury, for it is recorded that while Mr. Kemble asked a thousand guineas and a benefit ensured to £300, Signora Storace demanded £150 weekly, stipulating to sing but three times per week.

On the 12th January, 1797, Miss Mellon first played *Hero* in "Much Ado about Nothing" on the London boards, with *Benedick* by Mr. Kemble, and *Beatrice*, Miss Farren. As she measured her own improvement by the additional characters from Shakspeare assigned to her by Mr. Kemble, this was marked as a great event, and joyfully told beforehand to all her friends, the light-hearted, innocent girl little dreaming of the true force of the phrase regarding *Hero* being "done to death by slanderous tongues."

During this season, which closed early in June, she obtained the character of *Charlotte* in "Who's the Dupe," besides being continually employed in her usual line of character and frequently replacing Miss Farren, Mrs. Jordan, and others of comic celebrity.

Miss Mellon had from her childhood the greatest possible love of flowers, and all who have visited her at Holly Lodge and Stratton Street will agree that the liking did not diminish with her increased means.

In early days at every cottage where they lodged while on the country circuit of theatres there was some little scrap of earth called "Harriot's garden," and if the flowers failed to flourish there it did not arise from their not being planted thick enough.

Everyone gave "the pretty player child" a plant, and she stuck them all into the two feet square of which she was temporary owner, until hollyhocks jostled sunflowers to death, and sweet-pea strangled mignonette.

When she arrived in London the market for flowers at Covent Garden was the first place to which she went with her mother, who knew what would most please her, and for many years, as she related, the sight of these expensive and unattainable exotics made her more conscious of poverty than the greater evils of being forced to go home on foot after acting during bad weather, a trial which would have nearly killed a London girl, but to which Miss Mellon was inured by her country life. She likewise felt the loss of the simple rural luxuries which even wealth cannot command in the metropolis, and certainly the breakfast of a person of limited

means on first arriving in London is not calculated to give much hope of future comfort.

After passing some time at the economical house in New Street, the Entwises and Miss Mellon began to find that the distance of three miles from the theatre more than counterbalanced the cheapness of that neighbourhood, therefore they gave it up, and removed their scanty furniture to No. 17, Little Russell Street (exactly opposite the theatre), and of which they could only afford to hire the second floor.\*

Her provincial benefits amounting to a considerable sum (according to her estimation in those days), she ventured to take the first floor; the succeeding season bringing also its improvements, she rented the whole house, which indeed only extended her possession to the ground floor. The latter apartments Mrs. Entwisle considered might be let for a shop, so as nearly to pay the whole rent, but Miss Mellon received an application from a tenant con-

\* They took possession of this "grandeur" on the 17th of March, 1796, and the Duchess of St. Albans, to the very last anniversary during her lifetime of St. Patrick's Day, always made a pilgrimage on foot to this dirty, narrow street (or rather lane), where, in a plain dress and without her carriage or servants, she might contemplate and show to her companions the humble spot from whence she had risen. The shopkeepers who occupied the adjoining houses have often seen her there on St. Patrick's Day, shedding tears of pleasure at contemplating the miserable little building!



nected with her own loved profession, which she favoured beyond any other more advantageous one, and she let the ground floor at a rate which was quite a matter of charity. Her tenant was Mrs. Benson, the sister of Mrs. Stephen Kemble, both daughters of Satchell, the musical instrument maker to the Prince of Wales.

Mrs. Benson had become an early widow, under circumstances which excited to the utmost Miss Mellon's compassionate nature. Mr. Benson, a young country actor, had obtained, through his brother-in-law, Mr. S. Kemble, an engagement at Drury Lane immediately after his marriage; and in the summer he was engaged at the Haymarket. In addition to the toils of his profession, he tried the labour of literary composition, and was author of two successful dramas, "A Trip to Portsmouth" and "Love and Money," acted in the same year. His mind, being thus overtasked, unfortunately gave way; brain fever came on, and he threw himself out of the window of the garret where they lodged, in Brydges Street, Covent Garden, and was killed on the spot.

The young widow's sister, Mrs. Kemble, was absent at the time with Mr. S. Kemble at Edinburgh, where the latter had claimed to be manager of the theatre; but he was opposed by the fascinating and popular Mrs. Esten. The dispute was



both lengthy and expensive; Mrs. Esten's right being supported by the Duke of Hamilton, Mr. Kemble's by the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland, and other distinguished friends. Mr. Kemble's proving to be the most numerous party, Mrs. Esten offered to relinquish her pretensions for a valuable consideration; this sum had just been paid, and consequently had left the new manager's treasury very low.

Hence little could be done for poor Mrs. Benson, who, having some taste for making fancy articles, Miss Mellon advised her to turn it to advantage, and to attempt millinery, in the small shop of the latter's house.

Miss Mellon likewise exerted herself to procure some allowance for the widow from the theatrical fund. She had a general invitation to a place at the plain table of her kind young landlady; and, altogether, with her own exertions in millinery, she was enabled to make out a subsistence, until her position gradually improved through the connexions whom Miss Mellon and others recommended to patronize her.

This poor young woman, notwithstanding her increasing prosperity, died early, literally of a broken heart we must say, notwithstanding the sneers of the less feeling sex against what has been insinuated to be an impossibility.

Miss Mellon was a great favourite with a wealthy Jewish family, in humble life, named Emanuel, who evinced the utmost kindness to her at all times, and invited her to several of those domestic parties and religious ceremonies at which it is not customary to admit the strangers to their faith. One of these festivities was a grand dinner and ball, given after the marriage of some member of the family, and which, from the number of connexions entitled to be present, was given at an hotel in the city. So mighty an occasion required the dignity of Miss Mellon's one white satin gown, and the extravagance of fresh white shoes and gloves, which caused sad devastation in her weekly salary; but her Hebrew friends were not married every day, therefore she reconciled herself to the alarming expenditure by a resolution of economy in the succeeding week, and she set forth anticipating the pleasure of the ball after the banquet. On arriving at the hotel, she found the drawing-room filled with dark, clever-looking guests, the ladies wearing a greater profusion of diamonds than she ever saw at court in after-days: such earrings, such shoe-buckles, such gown-loops, glittered in the daylight—mixed with every coloured gem that bad taste could devise, and mostly displayed on brightly-coloured dresses! On the repast being announced, she was handed into the dining-room by some “dark individual,” and

found two wide tables laid out for more than a hundred guests. The tables groaned with the profusion of edibles, and there was a vast deal of gaiety. Miss Mellon, while seated, advanced her foot by chance, and finding a footstool, gladly took possession of it. Strange to relate, she found it too warm to endure ! and while sliding her delicate satin shoes from such a dangerous neighbourhood, she felt herself splashed excessively. In despair for the fate of her satin dress, she could eat no dinner, wondering what had happened. The parties were placed so close together that it was impossible to satisfy her curiosity as to what had formed her uneasy footstool ; but when the ladies rose, she resolved to ascertain this, and pretending to stoop for her glove, she peeped beneath the cloth, and discovered *an enormous roast goose*, the gravy of which had somewhat injured the appearance of the valued satin robe and shoes ! As far as her momentary glance could extend, she saw dishes of viands all the way under the table ; which so amused her that, instead of fretting about her misadventure, she laughingly told it all to her Hebrew neighbour. He and his friends were so angry at an attempt having been made to deprive them of what was “in their bond,” that, as soon as the ladies departed, all the attendants were summoned, and the doors locked on them. On examination it

was found that each had pockets of leather within his coat, to convey home the savoury dainties they had surreptitiously obtained from the table after it was laid out. They were doomed to have a foretaste of these treasures ; for one of the younger guests, delighted at their consternation, took the liberty of throwing a cold pie at one of the culprits, an example which was so quickly followed, that, when the cold missiles were exhausted, they seized on the warm ones ; and the attendants were glad to dive under the tables, and take the place of the abstracted dishes ! When all was thrown, the gentlemen said, “ Now help yourselves ! ” and proceeded to the ball-room, where Miss Mellon’s “ dark friend ” sought her instantly, to relate the capital revenge they had taken ; but the poor actress, who was prevented from enjoying the anticipated ball, thought to herself, as she moped in a corner, “ Yes, very fine revenge ; but it does not give me my dinner, my dance, my dress, nor my shoes ! ”

## CHAPTER IX.

Death of Countess of Derby—Miss Farren leaves the stage—Cicely Copesley in “The Will”—Reynolds’ reminiscences—Removes again to Liverpool—Mrs. Siddons’ arrears at Drury Lane—Liverpool merchants—Volunteer artillery—Disturbance at the theatre—Benefit—Anecdote of a sailor.

THE decease of the first Countess of Derby was announced in the green-room on the 15th of March, 1797. She was the only daughter of the Duke of Hamilton, and had been married to Lord Derby twenty-three years.

This event, though long expected, threw Miss Farren into such a state of nervous depression as to render her unequal to continue her theatrical performance.

Lord Derby, according to his promise, came soon after the funeral to claim her hand, as a tribute of respect for her conduct; and it was arranged that she should take leave of the stage when her spirits were equal to the effort. On the 8th of April she appeared

finally as *Lady Teazle*, to the most crowded house as yet seen in old Drury. Her spirits gave way in the last scenes, and when Mr. Wroughton repeated some few lines written for the event, her agitation was so great that Mr. King bore her off the stage.

Miss Mellon, with her warm heart overflowing, stood bathed in tears by the wing, and followed to the sofa where Miss Farren was placed. As the latter recovered a little, she was assisted to her dressing-room; and passing the weeping girl, addressed her kindly, and said, smiling, "So there is a way to cloud even *your* enviable spirits."

On the 1st of May, six weeks after Lady Derby's death, the Earl's second marriage took place; and Miss Farren's amiable private career continued until her death in 1829, during which long interval she was loved and respected by the distinguished circle who gladly received her as an ornament.

Theatrical contemporaries are exceedingly jealous if old intimacies are not continued as usual, by those who have been raised by marriage: forgetting that a woman who marries into a superior family can no longer have a choice of her own associates.

Great were the disappointments therefore when the new Lady Derby omitted sending wedding presents among her green-room friends. Miss Mellon (whose recent introduction had saved her from being excited by false hopes) was astonished

at the measures pursued to express covertly their anger.

Two very useful theatrical assistants are the call-boy and the dresser, as everybody knows ; and these worthies were questioned regarding Miss Farren's liberality to them. The dresser, whose lawful wages were nine shillings weekly, had received one extra week's pay ; and the poor little busy call-boy, a donation of half-a-crown.

At this statement, the outcry against Miss Farren's parsimony rose to its full height ; and every one had a story to tell, of which Miss Mellon (being the stranger) had to hear all the recitals.

It is not likely that Lady Derby could have been aware that such paltry sums were given to her attendants ; they are too miserable even for parsimony. But it was a pity, for her name's sake, that she was not as careful of her servants as Miss Mellon, who, in 1815, when she retired, settled £30 per annum on her dresser for life, and something proportionably liberal on the call-boy.

Mr. Anderson, the theatrical *coiffeur*, like the generality of his countrymen, possessed probity and a respectable education, and was engaged by Miss Mellon to settle her trifling weekly bills directly her salary was paid. He states that her great anxiety was to pay everyone as soon as the money came, and to limit her expenditure within her means.



Her character for probity soon became popular in that poor neighbourhood ; and the owners of all the little shops not only offered credit to herself, but also to anyone whom she would introduce. In these early days she suffered in several instances from having given belief to the assurances of some professional persons, that they would redeem the credit she procured for them ; and when they failed to do so, the shopkeepers had such faith in Miss Mellon's integrity, that they were content with a shilling per week as an instalment from her ; and at this rate she would defray the whole debt to which her good nature had rendered her liable.

However absurd it may seem for a duchess with £90,000 a year to have paid her friends' debts formerly by shilling instalments, it should be remembered that it was in the same proportion to her weekly stipend as if she had latterly paid by thousands.

On the 16th April, 1797, a new comedy was played at Drury Lane, entitled, "The Will," from the brilliant pen of Mr. Reynolds. The female characters were supported by Mrs. Jordan, Miss Mellon, Miss Tidswell, and Mrs. Booth. This comedy had very good success, and all the performers did justice to what was assigned them, perfectly satisfying the clever author, by his own account.

In his memoirs, published in 1827, writing of Miss Mellon, he says, "Cicely Copesley, the gamekeeper's daughter, in my comedy, was performed by Miss Mellon with considerable effect. I little thought at that time that I was to become the vassal of this young, handsome, Cicely Copesley. Mrs. Coutts is now my 'Lady of the Manor,' for under her I hold a small copyhold estate near Chelmsford, in Essex; and by an old feudal law (which, though obsolete, is still unrepealed) she might compel me, *gout and all*, to attend and serve at her next Highgate public breakfast in *armour*."

This passage having been read aloud one morning in 1828, at Holly Lodge, made the subject of it laugh until the tears stood in her eyes; and someone urged her to claim her feudal right of "armed attendance" from the author of "The Will."

"In any other case," she replied, "I might be rigid; but from *him* I would be happy to accept the 'Will' for the deed."

After the close of the London season, Miss Mellon, with Mr. and Mrs. Entwisle, arrived, June 21st, 1797, at Liverpool, where they remained until September 13th.

The following were her characters in forty-five nights' performances:—

*Priscilla Tomboy*; *Maria*, in "George Barnwell;" *Nell*; *Bell*, in the "Deuce is in him;" *Roxalana*;

*Ophelia* ; *Jessy Oatland*, in a "Cure for the Heart-ache ;" *Rosalind* ; *Maud* ; *Flora*, in the "Midnight Hour ;" *Fanny* ; *Joanna*, in the "Page ;" *Little Pickle*, four times ; *Miss Dorellon*, in "Wives as they were ;" *Fanny* ; *Priscilla Tomboy* ; *Jessy Oatland* ; *Miss Jenny*, seven times ; *Agnes*, in "Raymond and Agnes ;" *Phillis*, in the "Conscious Lovers ;" *Albina Mandeville*, in the "Will," five times ; *Ruth*, in "Honest Thieves ;" *Madge* ; *Kitty*, in "Abroad and at Home ;" *Ruth* ; *Nell* ; *Dolly*, in the "Woodman ;" *Jessy* ; *Annette*, in "Robin Hood ;" *Stella*, in the "Smugglers ;" *Dolly*, in the "Page ;" *Miss Peggy*, in the "Country Girl ;" *Roxalana* ; *Miss Hoyden* ; *Emily Tempest* ; *Fanny* ; *Amanthis*, in the "Child of Nature ;" *Ruth* ; *Lady Danvers*, in "Fortune's Fool ;" *Harriet*, in "He would be a Soldier ;" *Josephine*, in the "Children of the Wood ;" *Chloe*, in the "Lottery ;" *Rosalba*, in the "Italian Monk ;" *Lady Danvers* ; *Nancy* ; *Julia Faulkner* ; *Sophia*, in the "Lie of the Day."

In the summer of 1797, Mrs. Siddons again met Miss Mellon at Liverpool. The latter not being rich enough to allow her salary to be in arrear, had been paid with tolerable punctuality ; but Mrs. Siddons' debt from the Drury Lane treasury being less easy to defray, she had been obliged to leave town without any portion of it, although she had to

maintain a numerous family. In speaking of this distressing circumstance to an actor of the Liverpool company, she estimated her arrear of salary at nearly seventeen hundred pounds.

The pursuits at Liverpool that season were more of a warlike than dramatic nature. Eight French ships had anchored at Bantry Bay during the spring; and an invasion was expected at various maritime places in England. The merchants of Liverpool, amidst the prevailing consternation, bravely resolved to defend their fine town to the utmost; and, in order to render their good intentions effectual, some of the very leading merchants practised gunnery at the fort, until they could work, serve, and manage the guns, from the batteries, as well as regular artillerymen.

This praiseworthy exertion was not made without undergoing the quizzing inspection of the idlers of Liverpool; and the new artillery students had to encounter a battery of impertinence from the domestic foe at every public place.

Mrs. Siddons, at that time, had produced her grand study of *Jane Shore*; of which performance Miss Mellon related that, besides affecting the majority of the female spectators, it had the rare power of causing hysterics in a well-known literary gentleman, who was present at the first representation in London and was carried out, in con-

sequence of the interruption his cries caused to the performance.

At Liverpool, this *chef-d'œuvre* was announced, and the house was full to excess, Miss Mellon expecting that, perhaps, another scene of hysterics might result; but the wretches in the gallery, seeing the principal merchants with their families present, thought this a delightful opportunity of indulging their wit respecting the "soldiering." Accordingly, they formed two bands, one on each side of the gallery, and kept up a cross-dialogue of impertinence, about "charging guns with brown sugar and cocoa-nuts," and "small arms with cinnamon-powder and nutmegs," from the commencement of the play until its very end.

Miss Mellon is described to have been in an agony for the object of her theatrical devotion; she cried, she ran about behind the wings as if she were going out of her senses. But Mrs. Siddons, calm, though deadly pale, merely said to her, with a slight tremor in her voice, that "she would go through the *time* requisite for the scenes, but would not utter them."

She went on the stage, said aloud, "It is useless to act," crossed her arms, and merely murmured the speeches; and it is a fact, that the enjoyment of all the Liverpool patrons of theatricals was totally lost, through an unmanageable gallery, while the queen

of the drama went through the entire character of *Jane Shore* in dumb show, on the first night it was attempted there.

Miss Mellon's benefit was always the principal consideration with Mr. and Mrs. Entwisle, as they calculated on deriving the principal advantages arising from her exertions. During the bathing season at Liverpool, a great many of the inhabitants of Wigan usually go to the former place for their summer excursion; and when Miss Mellon arranged with the Liverpool manager, her mother stipulated for the half-clear benefit to be when they knew the Wigan visitors would be there.

Mr. Entwisle's father was well known and respected among the inhabitants of Wigan; therefore, his son wrote to the different families, stating whom he was, and requesting their patronage for Miss Mellon's night. The consequence of this was, that her benefit was unusually great, amounting to upwards of £270, from which only the sum of £50, for the expenses of the house, were to be deducted, and she had half the remainder.

The benefit was taken August 28th, Miss Mellon playing *Peggy*, in "The Country Girl;" *Rosalana*, in "The Sultan;" and *Miss Hoyden*, in "The Trip to Scarborough." A very singular production was written for this occasion, described in the bills as "An Address in praise of the British Navy, by a

seaman of Liverpool, now on board H.M.S. Venerable, to be spoken by Miss Mellon."

She was always considered an admirable reciter of prologues and addresses; a peculiar talent, in which she excelled many whose acting she never could hope to approach.

The failure of some of the superior performers in reciting this class of composition may perhaps arise from the deficiency of excitement to identify themselves with these trifles, as they would do in an entire character: whereas, to an inexperienced young comedian like Miss Mellon, everything was new and delightful: she was led on by the applause given to her youth and beauty, her gay spirits rose, and, becoming soon engrossed by whatever she had to recite at the time, she did it naturally and with animation.

After the play, she recited an epilogue on "Jealousy," in which she portrayed its effects on the characters of a Spanish, Italian, French, and English husband. This was a very clever comic composition, which she used to repeat for the amusement of her domestic party sometimes. The national peculiarities were given in the various ways in which these jealous husbands would express their feelings; and such was the accuracy of ear and power of imitation possessed by Miss Mellon, that she gave the broken English of the Frenchman,



Italian, and Spaniard in a manner quite distinct from each other, and in the different national accents and modulations of tone which those accustomed to live on the Continent could readily distinguish.

Within the last two years there was a striking and laughable proof of "powerful stage illusion," which had a parallel, half a century ago, during Miss Mellon's acting days at Liverpool.

The modern case related to a poor Jack Tar, just discharged from a merchant vessel, and for the first time in London. He treated himself to one of the theatres, where a nautically-named drama had tempted his curiosity; but the simple fellow soon became so entranced by the scenic action as to forget the absence of reality, and when he saw some English sailors "having the worst of it," he could bear the illusion no longer; he shouted "fair play," jumped over the orchestra, and helping the weak party, soon drove their assailants from the stage; the result of which knight-errantry was his being locked up in the station-house, and brought up next day by "the enemy" for assault, for which he was fined.

A pendant to this genuine sailor-deed was Miss Mellon's adventure at Liverpool, a circumstance which ran through all the papers and anecdote books of those days, and which she used to tell

frequently and with great humour. It was likewise a source of pride to her, she used laughingly to aver, "as proving what a fine tragic actress Harriot Mellon must have been, only that none but a poor sailor ever thought so."

The following was her general style of relating it:—"When I was a poor girl, working very hard for my thirty shillings a week, I went down to Liverpool during the holidays, where I was always kindly received, and derived the greatest advantage from all my benefits. I was to perform in a new piece, something like those pretty little affecting dramas they get up now at the minor theatres; and in my character I represented a poor, friendless, orphan girl, reduced to the most wretched poverty. A heartless tradesman persecutes the sad heroine for a heavy debt owing to him by her family, and insists on putting her in prison unless someone will be bail for her. The girl replies, 'Then I have no hope—I have not a friend in the world.' 'What! will no one go bail for you to save you from prison?' asks the stern creditor. 'I have told you I have not a friend on earth,' was my reply. But just as I was uttering the words, my eyes were attracted by the movements of a sailor in the upper gallery, who, springing over the railing, was letting himself down from one tier to another, until finally reaching the pit he bounded clear over the orchestra and

foot-lights, and placed himself beside me in a moment, before I could believe the evidence of my senses.

“‘Yes, you shall have *one* friend at least, my poor young woman,’ said he, with the greatest expression of feeling in his honest, sun-burnt countenance, ‘I will go bail for you to any amount. And as for *you*’ (turning to the frightened actor), ‘if you don’t bear a-hand and shift your moorings, you lubber, it will be the worse for you when I come athwart your bows.’

“Every creature in the house rose; the uproar was perfectly indescribable: peals of laughter, screams of terror, cheers from his tawny mess-mates in the gallery, preparatory scraping of violins from the orchestra; and, amidst the universal din, there stood the unconscious cause of it, sheltering me, ‘the poor, distressed, young woman,’ and breathing defiance and destruction against my mimic persecutor. It was impossible to resume the play, so the orchestra played ‘God save the King,’ while the curtain dropped over the scene, including the chivalric sailor. He was only persuaded to relinquish his care of me by the illusion being still maintained behind the scenes; the manager pretending to be an old friend of mine, unexpectedly arrived to rescue me from all difficulties with a profusion of theatrical bank-notes.

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To these the generous sailor would fain have added from his own hardly-earned gains ; which being gratefully declined by such a newly-made heiress as myself, he made his best sea-bow to all on the stage, shook hands heartily with me and the manager, and then quietly went home, under care of some of the party."

## CHAPTER X.

Returns to Drury Lane—New comedy—Advance in characters—  
First solo at Drury Lane—Mr. Graham—Sir Henry and  
Lady Tempest—Holly Lodge—Miss Goddard—Liverpool—  
Anecdotes—Death of Palmer on the stage—London.

ON the 12th of January, 1798, Miss Mellon played *Emily Tempest*, in “The Wheel of Fortune,” to the Penruddock of Mr. Kemble, which she considered one of his finest characters; and she even asserted that his personal appearance was so admirably calculated to sustain it, that many who might equal his Coriolanus and Pizarro would never be able to play with effect the misanthropic Penruddock.

In the after-piece of “Who’s the Dupe?” she had a new character of *Charlotte*. February 10th, she played *Nancy*, in a “Bold Stroke for a Wife;” 14th, *Cicely Copesley*; 16th, *Emily Tempest*. On the 19th, O’Keefe’s new comedy, “She’s Eloped,” came out, and was acted only once. The author

speaks thus bitterly of the cause of its failure : “ The comedy as I wrote it, and the comedy as altered by me to order, were nearly distinct pieces. I was forced to cut out, mangle, and change whole scenes and characters. John Bannister, who did *Plodden*, remarked to me, ‘ Mine was a very good part when I first got it, but now I can make nothing of it ! ’ Mrs. Jordan did *Arabel* ; Miss Mellon, *Grace* ; John Palmer, *Hyacinth* ; the last new part he played before his sudden death.” It was unfortunate for Miss Mellon that this piece was not successful, for O’Keefe had taken pains to make her part a very good one, in consequence of the care she had bestowed in acting his *Lady Godiva* two seasons previously.

On the 19th of March, 1798, the part of *Susan*, in the “ Follies of a Day,” was given to Miss Mellon. This was, indeed, a great step. Mrs. Jordan was very partial to playing this part, which is an excellent one. The farce is an unmusical version of *Le Nozze di Figaro* ; it was written by Holcroft for Covent Garden theatre, and he himself enacted *Figaro* in it. Miss Mellon had played *Susan* during the previous summer at Liverpool, and was perfectly at ease with it. When she assumed it at Drury Lane, her laughing, joyous manner was well suited to the part, and she “ looked ” it decidedly better than her great predecessor. The next month

she played *Betty Blackberry*, in a sort of musical medley, extracted from different dramas, entitled "The Nosegay of Weeds;" in this she sang a song—the first solo she ever dared to venture upon at Drury Lane. She was successful, and was encored, but the piece, if it deserves that title, did not enjoy a long reign.

Colman's "Ways and Means" was this season transferred from the Haymarket, for the purpose of exhibiting Bannister in *Sir David Dunder*. Miss Mellon had played *Harriett* (a lively romping girl, who is deeply in love, and not averse to Gretna Green) so much to his liking at Liverpool, that he begged she might be cast in that character here. His wish being acceded to, the performance raised her so much in the estimation of the presiding powers that she was soon afterwards given *Miss Tittup*, in "Bon Ton;" and, to crown all, *Cowslip*. Though "The Agreeable Surprise" is now but seldom played, it was then very attractive. Mrs. Sumbal Wells, one of the prettiest and most eccentric of women, made her name and her fortune by it: "Cowslip-hats" and "Cowslip-gowns" were, during her and Edwin's time, the rage. Mrs. Gibbs had subsequently captivated the town in it; and lastly, Mrs. Jordan had consented to play it. Bannister, no doubt, had exerted his influence to obtain the character for Miss Mellon, for he was the *Lingo*.



She performed it with great applause, although so nervous that when the symphony ceased for her song she was afraid to commence it. The audience seeing her confusion gave her a cheering round of applause, and the leader repeated the symphony: she sung it amid enthusiastic plaudits, and was loudly encored.

Will it be credited that at this period she received but two pounds per week? and so precarious, for a season or two, was her retention even at that paltry pittance, that a letter is extant addressed to Mr. Peake (father of the well-known dramatist), begging him to obtain for her a re-engagement at that sum. This letter was the property of the late Mr. Mathews, and was sold recently at the auction of that gentleman's library.

During that season she played *Cherry*, in "The Beaux' Stratagem," to the *Archer* of John Kemble; and *Pink*, in "The Young Quaker," to Bannister's *Young Sadboy*. She was so much liked as *Cherry* that a very popular engraving (which obtained a great sale) was made of her in that character.

Indeed, from this time she was looked upon in the theatre (from her readiness to supply the place of any actress who was absent) as entitled to any good part the manager could place at her disposal; and her attention and correct study made him feel secure in relying on her efforts.

Of her *Cowslip*, a Thespian magazine speaks thus: "Bannister is doing all his possible to make us forget that he was not the original *Lingo*. He comes very hard on the heels of the great 'master of scholars,' but in the dialogue only; in the songs no one ever did, nor is it likely ever will, equal Edwin. Still Jack dashes at them quite in the right way; and, having now long lost the perfect *Lingo*, we must not find fault with the best one (now) upon the stage. Miss Mellon carried cream as *Cowslip*. She is a very improving actress, and showed none the worse for the timidity which she displayed in the attempt. If the pretty inmate of Cowslip Lodge\* were here, it would be a very different thing; but as she is not, we have no objection to her very pretty substitute. A little more energy, a little more archness, a little more boldness in depicting the simplicity of the *little dairy-maid*, and the performance would be an excellent one. As Mrs. Jordan is not very fortunate in that part, and feels huffed at playing it, Miss Mellon stands a chance of keeping it."

Soon after Miss Mellon's arrival in London this season, the well-known and respected magistrate of Bow Street, Mr. Graham, was presented to her by R. B. Sheridan. At that time he had the management of Drury Lane Theatre, under the direction of

\* Mrs. Wells had a cottage of that name.

the Lord Chancellor. Mr. Graham felt so much pleased with her artless manner and unassuming cheerfulness in her humble professional engagement, that he took a great interest in her welfare ; and, on inquiring into her conduct in former theatrical circles, he received the most satisfactory accounts from her provincial acquaintance, justifying the favourable opinion he had inferred from her short London career.

When her improved judgment and knowledge of the world induced her to relinquish the society of some few who had introduced themselves to her at first, and who were more specious than advantageous for a young, unprotected female, their unbounded animosity raised some most unkind reports against her, which depressed even her elastic spirits. Mr. Graham, from his situation as magistrate, and his theatrical sway, had unusual means of forming a just opinion on the reports. "He thoroughly believed in her innocence, therefore always stood forth her champion ; for which she was grateful, and in all her little difficulties consulted him as her friend." (This creditable testimonial is quoted from a recent letter of Mr. Graham's widow.) With the consideration of a parent, he saw how advantageous it would be for an unjustly calumniated young person to have the benefit of female patronage ; and, feeling sure of her respectability, he gave the strongest

and most flattering evidence of it in his power—namely, by presenting her to his wife, at their own house.

This was a great event for the friendless girl. Her new patroness, in addition to being a very elegant woman, was both well connected and moved in good society. Therefore she felt cheered and supported against the malignity which at first had depressed her mind.

It was in this house that Miss Mellon became acquainted with Sir Henry and Lady Tempest (cousins of Mrs. Graham), with whom she was soon a great favourite, from her sprightly, artless manners. Sir Henry Tempest\* had just then built part of the villa at Holly Lodge; and, as they frequently had the merry actress staying there, it may be supposed what delight she experienced in leaving close, dark Little Russell Street, for the pure, dry air, and rural walks of Highgate.†

\* The name of Sir Henry Tempest is often confused with that of his first cousin, Sir Harry Tempest Vane, who married the late Countess of Antrim, mother of the Marchioness of Londonderry.

† All who have seen this charming villa must be struck with the beauty of its grounds and the surrounding landscape; but with the poor town-sick girl, who had passed most of her early life in the country, the rural freshness of Holly Lodge became quite a mania, like the seaman's dream of green fields. In case of illness, she always fancied the air there was endowed with some especial quality for her recovery. Even after a subsequent change had made her mistress of the spot, and long possession might be supposed to

But to return to Mr. and Mrs. Graham. They continued firm friends of Miss Mellon from soon after her arrival in London to her retirement from the stage. So intimate was she with the family of this respected magistrate that, in 1813, when her house in Little Russell Street fell in, Mrs. Graham took Miss Mellon and her then recently adopted young companion to stay in their fine house in Queen Street, where they remained until Miss Mellon had time to take and furnish a house in Southampton Street.

The circumstances respecting this new companion of Miss Mellon's are so creditable to her disposition, that they must be given at greater length than the above slight allusion.

Mrs. Graham had a sister many years her junior, who had died, leaving a youthful daughter, who soon after experienced the loss of her father also. Miss Mellon conceived an extreme affection for this interesting young creature, whose story she imparted to Mr. Coutts; and, with the concurrence of her old friend, she made an offer of taking her altogether from the charge of her aunts, Mrs. Graham and

have weakened the impression, her early attachment continued in full force—"Little Holly Lodge" being to the last spoken of as her favourite enjoyment. In any allusion to the final distribution of her property, it is reported that she used to say, "But Holly Lodge I must save for the Duke, as being what *I* loved best of all I possessed."

Lady Tempest. This was in 1812. The aforesaid guardians of the young lady considered that, as Miss Mellon's property, after seventeen years on the London boards, was considerable, it would enable her to place her young *protégée* in a position suitable to her birth; while their confidence in her care of the orphan girl, and the strictness with which Mr. Coutts made her discard every exceptional acquaintance, caused them to feel that the situation would be most favourable for the orphan.

Sir Henry and Lady Tempest having given a willing sanction, Miss Mellon received her young charge from her guardian, Mr. Graham, whose sole stipulation was, that she should never be brought into the green-room or dressing-rooms of the theatres, as Miss Mellon already kept a person of her own age to accompany her during all her professional duties.

This young lady, Miss Eleanor Goddard, grew up under the most affectionate and watchful care of Miss Mellon, which she repaid by great attachment. From 1812 she remained with Miss Mellon until her marriage with Mr. Coutts in 1815, continuing during the six subsequent years of his lifetime, the five years of widowhood of Mrs. Coutts, and for four years after her marriage with the Duke of St. Albans—when increasing ill-health in the invalid Miss Goddard obliged her to leave her friend and patroness, after living together *nineteen years*, without



one interval of separation. As a proof that, with the duchess, earliest friends had the strongest portion of her regard, she allowed this lady a handsome income after their separation, and in the will of the duchess Miss Goddard is one of the few annuitants who are named, the same sum being continued to her as heretofore.

Drury Lane closed on the 14th of June, and Miss Mellon arrived on the 28th at Liverpool, remaining until September, having played *Rosalind*, three times; *Amanthis*; *Ann Lovely*, twice; *Nell*, in "The Devil to Pay;" *Jessye*; *Josephine*, twice; *Albina*; *Maud*; *E. Bloomly*; *Rose Sydney*, in "Secrets worth Knowing;" *Charlotte*, in "The Apprentice;" *Lydia Languish*; *Fanny*, in "The Shipwreck;" *Phyllis*, in "The Conscious Lovers;" *Lady Teazle*; *Tilburina*; *Madge*; *Annette*; *Miss Grantham*; *Eva*, in "Curiosity;" *Kitty*; *Jacinta*, in "Lovers' Quarrels;" *Lucy*; *Estifania*; *Angela*, in "The Castle Spectre," three times; *Joanna*; *Barbara*; *Little Pickle*; *Miss Dorillon*; *Fadladininida*, in "Chrononhotonthologos;" *Susan*; *Letitia Hardy*; *Cowslip*; *Miss Wooburn*; *Donna Olivia*; *Miss Price*; *Moggy M'Gilpin*, in "The Highland Reel;" *Rose*; *Sydney*; *Miss Lucy*; *Nancy*; *Jane*, in "Wild Oats;" *Miss Leeson*, in "School for Wives;" *Agnes*; *Sabina Rosny*.

She took an entire benefit at Liverpool this season,



September 3rd, playing *Donna Olivia*, in "The Bold Stroke; *Miss Price*, in "Ben the Sailor;" and *Moggy M'Gilpin*, in the "Highland Reel." After the play, she gave an address of thanks to the Liverpool audience; and, before the second farce, recited her famous description of jealousy, before mentioned, in a Spanish, French, Italian, and English husband.

Prior to the benefit, Mr. Entwisle did not forget his customary solicitations to the visitors from his native Wigan, to patronize his step-daughter. With their attendance, and her great popularity at Liverpool, after paying all expenses, she cleared £240; and her salary had likewise been augmented, so that she departed quite "a person of property!"

Mr. Gibson, the performer on the violin at the Ulverstone Theatre, with whom the Entwisles and little Harriot Mellon resided while in that town nine years previously, relates that he was at Liverpool in 1798, when Miss Mellon was acting there, and this being three years after her having a London engagement, he concluded his former lodger must be so inflated with success as to despise all her former connexions. Coming down the High Street one day he recognized at some distance her tall figure walking with Miss Thwaytes and some other young ladies of Liverpool who patronized her. The play-mate of her early days could not brook the chance of being addressed distantly by one whom he had

nursed for hours in her childhood, and seeing no other means of escaping a mortifying acknowledgment, he arrested his steps before a print-shop, and, bending forward, affected to be totally engrossed by examining the pictures until he concluded that the party had passed him.

His plan, however, was not destined to succeed, for the quick eyes he sought to escape had recognized him at a distance, and, having mentioned to her companions the humble but respectable friend she was about to accost, the whole party drew up at the print-shop. Nothing could exceed the trepidation of the bashful violinist on finding himself surrounded by such an assemblage of elegantly-dressed young ladies, for they were all *en grande toilette*, going to an oratorio to which they were taking Miss Mellon. The latter soon dispelled his awkwardness by extending her hand and kindly saying—"My good Gibson, I shall not allow you to shun me in that way. I have told these ladies how kind and indulgent you were in my childish days, therefore they know I am anxious to see you."

She then entered into numerous details with him, making inquiries after every person she had known at Ulverstone, until at length, being fearful of her young patronesses risking their places at the festival, she said—"I have not heard half enough of dear old Ulverstone, but these ladies are taking me to

the Oratorio, therefore I must not keep them waiting. My mother and her husband are living here with me, and if you will come to dinner to-day we shall be very glad to converse with you on old times !”

Gibson says her appearance at this time (she was then in her twenty-first year) was very striking from the brilliancy and contrast of her complexion, eyes, and teeth; her features, however, were but little altered since her childhood, and what struck him the most was the sweet, low sound of her voice, so childlike in its tone that he could have closed his eyes and fancied, while she spoke, he was again listening to the little child saying her lesson or learning some of her future speeches.

He did not fail to join the dinner party, when, instead of seeking to mystify the provincial musician by fictitious accounts of her wonderful success on the London boards, she candidly told him of all her disappointments, hopes deferred, and the other disadvantages attending a *début* made without especial patronage and interest.

On the 2nd of August, 1798, at Liverpool, she was to have played in the after-piece “The Deserter,” when the performance was suddenly and tragically closed by John Palmer falling dead whilst performing the character of the *Stranger*.

This appalling death is too well remembered in

the theatrical world to require any allusion, except that Miss Mellon, by being at the theatre, knew some particulars of the sad cause which have not generally transpired.

Palmer had been labouring under great mental distress arising from pecuniary difficulties, and had arrived at Liverpool with the intention of visiting America, leaving his children in London until better prospects arose.

Mr. Aikin, the manager, prevailed on him to perform the *Stranger* on the 12th of July, and the representation was so fine that, by general desire, he was induced to repeat it. While rehearsing on the morning of performance he received an express relating the sudden death of his son, a youth universally beloved, and of great promise in point of talent.

The play, of course, was deferred, for the wretched father was carried almost senseless from the theatre. It was the general opinion that, after an interval of some days, he should be roused from his apathy, and perhaps nothing could excite an actor like professional exertion. Therefore he was urged to re-appear, and the broken-spirited man made but little resistance.

He arrived at the theatre tolerably calm in the evening, but was silent as if afraid to trust himself in conversation, whilst respect for his misfortunes

threw a solemnity over the generally gay party in the green-room.

He went through the play almost mechanically, until the fourth act, when the *Stranger* has to refer to his children. He was dreadfully agitated; the audience feeling too deeply even to encourage him; finally, in uttering the well-known words, "*There is another and a better world!*" he expired \*—a case,

\* The following is the announcement of Mr. Palmer's death in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for August, 1798 :—

"DEATHS.—While performing the part of the *Stranger* on the Liverpool stage, Mr. John Palmer, the comedian. It is universally admitted that a fit of apoplexy occasioned his death, but professional men differ on the cause of it, some asserting that his constitution must have been prone to apoplexy, and that his life would have been so terminated at all events, while others affirm the fit to have been occasioned by the effort of the moment. Doctors Mitchell and Corry gave it as their opinion that he certainly died of a broken heart, in consequence of the family afflictions which he had lately experienced. He received on the morning of the day in which he was to have performed the *Stranger* for the first time the distressing intelligence of the death of his second son, a youth in whom his fondest hopes were centred, and whose amiable manners had brought in action the tenderest affections of a parent. The play in consequence of this was deferred till the Friday following, during which interval he had in vain endeavoured to calm the agitation of his mind. The success with which he performed the part called for a second representation, in which he fell a sacrifice to the poignancy of his own feelings, and in which the audience were doomed to witness a catastrophe which will never be forgotten. On the preceding Sunday he dined with Messrs. Hurst, Hammerton, and Mara. After dinner Mr. Hurst complained that of late he had always found himself exceedingly

if ever there was one, of a *broken heart!* The theatre was closed for some time afterwards. His funeral was magnificent, defrayed by the corpora-

drowsy after his meals. Mr. Palmer, in a most friendly and feeling manner, said, 'My dear Dick' (for so he familiarly called Mr. Hurst), 'for God's sake endeavour to overcome those alarming symptoms,' and after a short pause added, 'I fear, my dear friend, that my own afflictions will very shortly bring me to my grave.' For some days, however, he seemed to bear up against these trying misfortunes with much resolution, and on the Wednesday following performed the part of *Young Wilding* in 'The Liar' with a considerable degree of spirit. On Thursday morning he appeared rather dejected, and all the efforts of his friends were scarcely capable of rousing him from the state of melancholy in which he appeared to have sunk. In the evening of that day he appeared in the character of the *Stranger*, in the new play of that name; and, in the two first acts, exerted himself with great effect; in the third, he displayed evident marks of depression. In the fourth act, Baron Steinfort obtains an interview with the Stranger, whom he discovers to be his old friend. He prevails on him to relate the cause of his seclusion from the world; and, as he was about to reply to the question of Baron Steinfort, relative to his children, he appeared unusually agitated. He endeavoured to proceed, but his feelings evidently overcame him; the hand of Death arrested his progress, and he instantly fell upon his back, heaved a convulsive sigh, and instantly expired without a groan. The audience supposed, for the moment, that his fall was nothing more than a studied addition to the part; but, on seeing him carried off in deadly stiffness, the utmost astonishment and terror became depicted on every countenance. Hammerton, Callan, and Mara were the persons who conveyed the lifeless body from the stage into the scene-room. Medical assistance was immediately procured; his veins were opened, but they yielded not a single drop of blood; and every other means of resuscitation was had re-



tion, and attended by many of the best families in the neighbourhood. The managers of Drury Lane and the Haymarket gave free benefits for the

course to without effect. The gentlemen of the faculty, finding every means ineffectual, formally announced his death. The piercing shrieks of the women, and the heavy sighs of the men, which succeeded this melancholy annunciation exceeded the power of language to describe. The surgical operation upon the body continued about an hour ; after which, all hopes of recovery having vanished, he was carried home to his lodgings. Mr. Aikin, the manager, came on the stage to announce the melancholy event to the audience, but so completely overcome with grief as to be incapable of uttering a sentence, and was at length forced to retire without being able to make himself understood ; he was bathed in tears, and, for the moment, sunk under the generous feelings of his manly nature. Incedon then came forward, and mustered sufficient resolution to communicate the dreadful circumstance. The house was instantly evacuated in mournful silence, and the people forming themselves into parties, contemplated the fatal occurrence in the open square till a late hour next morning. As an actor, his death is a great loss to the stage, and therefore to the public. His figure and manner gave an importance to many characters, which, in other hands, would have passed unnoticed. In delivering a prologue, and in the graceful and insinuating way in which he impressed an occasional address, he was unequalled. A more general performer since the days, and during the latter part of the days, of the inimitable Garrick the stage has not boasted ; and, in the peculiar province to which his talents were adapted, he not only stood without a competitor, but possessed very great excellence. The province to which we allude was certainly the sprightlier parts of comedy, of which the predominant feature is easy confidence, such as *Dick* or *Brass*, in 'The Confederacy ;' *Brush*, in 'The Clandestine Marriage ;' and *Lord Duke*, in 'High Life below Stairs.' In all these parts, but particularly the latter,



bereaved family, by which considerable sums were collected.

During that season Miss Mellon progressed further the authors might be supposed to have written them on purpose for him, which was indeed the case with *Brush*, a subordinate part, but rendered very conspicuous and very entertaining in the hands of Palmer. This province seemed to be what may be more immediately termed his forte ; but he possessed considerable merit in a variety of characters. His *Colonel Feignwell*, in 'A Bold Stroke for a Wife,' was an admirable proof of the force and versatility of his powers, and, perhaps, was altogether equal to any comic performance ever seen. *Sir Toby*, in 'Twelfth Night,' was also a part in which he manifested uncommon abilities, and which he supported with such force, humour, truth, and spirit as to produce all the effect of real life. Another of his most successful exertions was *Sergeant Kite*, in which he must have completely satisfied the wishes of Farquhar, who, in all probability, never saw it performed with equal pleasantry, correctness, and humour. This part, though so well performed by Mr. Palmer, he relinquished for *Brazen*, in the same excellent comedy ; but, whether he had not studied it with equal attention, or whether the public regretted the loss of so exquisite a *Kite*, he certainly did not make such an impression upon them as might be expected from the nature of his talents. The merit of his *Joseph Surface* has been universally admitted, and it was indeed a proof of great skill. The hypocrisy was presented with a smooth and specious subtlety that left nothing for the author to desire beyond what was evident in the performance. But Palmer did not excel in comedy only. He was very forcible and impressive in the turbulent parts of tragedy, such as usurping tyrants and ambitious ruffians. There was, however, one part in which he sustained a dignified serenity, mingled with the emotions of tender affection, and supported by gentlemanly manners, that might rank with the very best efforts of his theatrical powers : *Villeroy*, in the tragedy of 'Isabella.' *Stukely*, in 'The Gamester,'

ther in the favour of the audience of Liverpool; and having been so successful at her benefit, she re-

was also another proof of Mr. Palmer's ability that deserves a distinct notice. Nothing could be more finished than his artful mode of deluding the credulous and irresolute husband, his insidious attempts to excite and to work upon the jealousy of the wife, and the shame, confusion, and mortification of conscious cowardice when he is reproached and insulted by the virtuous *Lewson*. His manners in private life were those of the polished gentleman; and the feelings of his heart were such as the circumstances which we have already related forbid we should mention again. Though Mr. Palmer's character has been often the subject of public notice, it is but justice to say that Censure has been rather too severe in her animadversions. If he was brought into embarrassments by his desire of becoming a manager, he only indulged a natural ambition, and such as his abilities might warrant. In his attempt to establish the Royalty Theatre, he was in a great degree deceived by 'the glorious uncertainty of the law;' for he certainly consulted many professional men of acknowledged ability on the occasion, and was emboldened by their opinions to persevere in raising an expensive edifice, which would most probably have afforded him an ample fortune if his efforts had not been suppressed by authority. He, perhaps, gave into a style of living which, considering his large family, and the precariousness of his profession, it is impossible to reconcile with the rules of rational economy; but allowance ought to be made for the manners of the times, for the prevalence of the passions, and indeed for the influence of a handsome person, that exposed him to expenses which the prudent may condemn, but which they, perhaps, would hardly have avoided if they had been placed in a similar situation, with similar recommendations. He was a most affectionate father, and many of the embarrassments under which he laboured arose from the excess of parental fondness. His sudden death is a fatal blow to his family; for as it was understood that he would certainly have succeeded to the management of Drury Lane

turned to town, after having "led the business," as it is termed, in the old comedies and farces; and

Theatre, it is not improbable that he would finally have surmounted all his troubles and have left a comfortable provision for his offspring. For variety of talents and professional industry, Mr. Palmer has not left his superior on the English stage. His rise to the great share of public patronage which he enjoyed was, however, very slow, and opposed from time to time by obstacles which would have discouraged any other man less confident and persevering. An application was made in his favour to Mr. Garrick to grant him an engagement at the early age of fifteen; but the manager, having condescended to hear him rehearse, declared that he would never make an actor. The soundness of Mr. Garrick's judgment was by no means proportionate to the splendour of his mimic powers, as this inimitable performer afterwards pronounced a similar opinion on Henderson and Mrs. Siddons. His first part was *Harry Scamper*, in Foote's pleasant piece of 'The Orators,' and Charles Bannister made his *début* at the same time in the character of *Will*, an Irishman. He was discharged at the end of the season, and played afterwards at Sheffield and Norwich. He returned to the Haymarket Theatre, when Mr. and Mrs. Barry were engaged there, and distinguished himself very much by his performance of several respectable parts. In consequence of this success, Mr. Garrick enrolled him in the Drury Lane corps, but trusted him with nothing of importance till the death of his namesake, Mr. Palmer, son-in-law to the celebrated Mrs. Pritchard, and who was in considerable repute for the ease and elegance with which he played the genteel cast of characters. From this period Mr. Palmer had constant opportunities of displaying an uncommon versatility of powers, and at length became an universal favourite. With the exception of the last four or five years, Mr. Palmer had been imprudent in the management of his domestic affairs; but his misfortunes were still greater than his imprudence. Being involved for some years past in pecuniary embarrassments, his creditors not long since insured his

then contentedly went on Drury stage for third and fourth-rate characters. Her talents, however, were

life at Blackfriars for £2,000, which sum they are of course entitled to. He might have justly said, even to the end of his career, in the language of the poet Young—

‘Woes cluster ; rare are solitary woes ;

They love a train—they tread each other’s heel.’

His funeral took place on the 6th, and was conducted with the most solemn respectability. The hearse was preceded by mutes on horseback, and followed by Messrs. Aikin, Holman, Whitfield, Incedon, Mattocks, and Wild. The chief mourners were, Mr. Hurst (as his oldest acquaintance), and a Mr. Stevens, cousin to the deceased. Next came Major Potts, Captain Snow (the gentleman who performed near two years since at Covent Garden, under the assumed name of Hargrave), Captain Kennedy ; Messrs. Hammerton, Farley, Tomkins, Toms, Emery, Demaria (the painter), Clinch, Hollingswood, and the rest of the company ; the whole of whom accompanied the corpse in mournful silence from Liverpool to the neighbouring village of Walton, where the body was interred. The procession set out at eight o’clock in the morning, and reached the church about half-past nine. Prayers being read over the body, it was committed to a grave, seven feet deep, dug in a rock. The coffin was of oak, covered with black cloth, and on the plate was simply inscribed, ‘Mr. John Palmer, aged 53.’ He was, however, three or four years older, but there was no person in Liverpool who correctly knew his age. A stone is to be placed at the head of the grave with the following inscription, being the very words he had just spoken in the character of the *Stranger* :—

‘There is another and a better world !’

Mr. Palmer has left eight children. We learn, with much satisfaction, that a play was performed at Liverpool Theatre on the 13th, when the receipts of the house amounted, it is said, to £400, including a donation of £50 from the Countess of Derby.

now known, and when any opportunity occurred she had reason to believe they would be called into requisition.

Mr. Taylor, proprietor of the Opera House, generously gave a free night at his theatre, for the benefit of the orphans of Mr. Palmer, when the receipts amounted to £700 ; and Mr. Sheridan has, with equal liberality, advertised the 15th of September for the same purpose at Drury Lane Theatre."

## CHAPTER XI.

Performances at Drury Lane—Improved class of characters—  
“Rule a Wife and Have a Wife”—Covent Garden management—Professional offers—Visit to Epsom Theatre and its consequences.

IN January, 1799, we find Miss Mellon acting *Lucy* in the “*Virgin Unmasked*,” a great part of Mrs. Jordan’s; there is no doubt, therefore, that some temporary illness deprived Drury Lane of that lady’s services for a time, and that Miss Mellon had the good fortune to act in her place.

Soon after this, M. G. Lewis wrote a strange farce, with the title of “*Twins; or, Is it He or his Brother?*” Mr. Bannister’s success in “*Three and the Deuce*” led to this attempt; he, of course, representing the brothers. In this farce a very good original part fell into Miss Mellon’s hands; but, alas! Lewis was not more successful than O’Keefe; the farce failed entirely.

*Celia*, in "As you Like it," was given to Miss Mellon October 15th. This was her first performance in that character, in which the contemporary critics gave her considerable praise, for the graceful and buoyant manner in which she played it. The *Morning Advertiser* says: "Miss Mellon's *Celia* is quite fascinating; a marked improvement appeared in her performance throughout the play."

In October she played *Inez*, in "The Wonder;" *Ann Lovely*, in the "Bold Stroke for a Wife;" *Charlotte*, in "The Apprentice," to J. Bannister's *Dick*; no other characters being named in the advertisement; and November 7th, *Lydia Languish*, great improved, according to the critics' accounts; *Ann Lovely*, *Estifania*, *Celia*, *Kitty Pry*; with only her name and Suett's in the bills, *Charlotte* and *Dorcas*.

Miss De Camp, who was on very intimate terms with Miss Mellon, gave her the character of *Tulip*, in the play of "First Faults." It succeeded very well; but its popularity was injured by an attack upon it, made by Mr. Earle, who said the play was his, and that Miss De Camp must have seen it in the theatre to which he had presented it for acceptance. It was generally thought that the tenacious author was in the wrong, but still the play was hurt by it. For the third time, therefore, the attempts of authors to further the interests of Miss Mellon failed.



November 14th, she acted *Miranda*, in "The Tempest," and was very highly commended by the press. This was followed by *Dorcas*, in "The Mock Doctor," a part she had studied with great care, and which she played (with one exception) better than any other actress on the stage.

In the early part of 1800 she came into a class of performances which fell to her in consequence of the temporary withdrawal of Mrs. Jordan. She played *Estifania*, in "Rule a Wife and Have a Wife;" having been carefully tutored in all the points of the character by John Bannister (who played the *Copper Captain*). She was considered to have made "a hit, a very palpable hit." The part is of a coarser quality than those which now succeed upon our stage; her attempts to trick *Michael Perez*, who is doing exactly the same by her, and to win him when she deems him rich; her indignant rage at the cheat put upon her; her jeers when he claims his valuables; her exhibition of the tinsel he has passed off for gold, and her fine climax, "a copper—copper captain!" are stated to have been quite admirable. In this part, as in that of *Dorcas*, she flung off that appearance of laziness (for it was not apathy) which was the first and the besetting fault of many of her assumptions. Bannister had evidently succeeded in imparting to her a little of his own mercurial spirit; and had

she, at that period, been given a succession of similar casts to act with him, good judges say there can be little doubt the name of Mellon would now stand far higher in the annals of the drama. But she was, unfortunately for herself, more useful than important to the manager; she was the representative of a number of inferior, though by no means insignificant characters; that is to say, poor in themselves, but producing an effect on others in the piece. After the triumph of *Estifania*, her ambition was struck down by two or three of these parts in succession; and it is a well-known dramatic axiom, that “alternating great and trivial characters will injure the powers of the finest actress in the world.”

What has been said of her *Estifania*, and the few remarks which follow, are rather embodiments of the opinions of an actor who has continually performed with her in the piece, than a statement of personal opinions or recollections.

“The whole play of ‘Rule a Wife and Have a Wife,’ or rather, the whole of the comic portion of it, suited not only the powers, but the person of Miss Mellon. She looked the reckless but beautiful trickstress to the life. In it she could evolve all her youthful recollections of Mrs. Abingdon, blending them with the touches taught her by Bannister, so that the picture was perfect. It does no discredit

to the fame of Mrs. Glover to say that, in this part, Miss Mellon's comedy was of the same school as her own. Even the admirable actress above named could not exceed Miss Mellon's reading of the retorting passages —

‘ Sir, there's your treasure ; sell it to a tinker to mend old kettles.

‘ Let all the world view here the captain's treasure ; here's a shocing horn, a chain, gilt over, how it scenteth ! and here's another of a lesser value ; so little, I would shame to tie my monkey in't. These are my jointures ! Blush, and save a labour, or these—these will else blush for thee ! ’

“ In scene 2, act 5, Bannister and herself kept up the ball merrily ; her feigned sorrow and repentance, the meek, despairing look, and flattering accent, with which she uttered —

‘ I know you'll kill me, and I know 'tis useless to beg for mercy ; pray let me draw my book out and pray a little,’

were inimitable ; and sustained, if not heightened, by her by-play through his speech —

*Michael.* ‘ Do : a very little ;

For I have further business than thy killing—

*I have money yet to borrow—speak when you're ready.’*

“ Here she cowered shudderingly beneath the uplifted sword of the captain, and then broke forth into tones half angry, half derisive, whilst her attitude made her look like a statue.

*Estif.* ‘ Now, now, sir—now ! ’ (*producing a pistol.*)

“This situation, which has been borrowed in a hundred melodramas since, then always electrified the house; and the applause was fairly divided between the actress and actor. Bannister’s balked, vexed, angry, yet fearful expression, can never be forgotten; nor his transition from triumph to dupedom—hers, from well-feigned fearfulness to daring and triumph.”

At the commencement of the winter season of 1800, Mrs. Jordan had permission to star for a month or six weeks. This gave Miss Mellon *Albina Mandeville*; it was the second part in which she appeared *en homme*. She had very considerably the advantage of Mrs. Jordan in her dashing representation of the young naval officer. The latter great actress not unfrequently annoyed her friends by assuming this and other characters, wherein she had to “don the manly garb,” in which she appeared to disadvantage; moreover, she was never very tall, and at this period was remarkably *embon-point*, and forty-four years of age. Miss Mellon, as far as appearances went, had all the advantage; but there, of course, comparison is at an end. In the representation of the giddy, but free-hearted girl; the dashing, daring lieutenant, running headlong into danger, whilst her woman’s heart is fluttering in fear for the event; in her fine change of expression to the giggling, dawdling, almost idiotic school-

girl; in her burst of childish rapture, when she laughingly screamed forth, "School's up! school's up!" Mrs. Jordan has never been approached, will probably never be equalled, and certainly cannot possibly be excelled. It was most creditable to the talents of her successor that she could be, and was, received at all in this part, after such a performance as that of the great original.

*Violetta*, in "The Indian;" *Wishwell*, in "The Double Gallant;" and *Blanche*, in "The Iron Chest," were added to her list of stock parts this season.

The perfect good humour with which Miss Mellon yielded up the characters in which she had gained temporary honours, disarmed all jealousy—a feeling not uncommon in the breasts of even the greatest actresses. It was not a mere assumption of good humour either; her nature was too careless, her temper too hasty, for any consideration of *prudence* ever to check the utterance of what she felt at any period of her life. Most of her annoyances arose from the ungovernable, yet artless way in which her unfavourable opinions were communicated by her to the actual objects of them. This unfortunate frankness she inherited from Mrs. Entwisle, whom no consideration could withhold from expressing all the violence she felt.

Hughes (who began revolutionizing the drama, by getting up a real fox-chase on Covent Garden stage

in 1792), after progressing at the Surrey, and making it a valuable property, died. His successor, Mr. Cross, endeavoured to infuse more of the dramatic, and less of the equestrian, into his performances; and was from 1798 to 1806 perpetually on the lookout for actors and actresses who had received a regular theatrical training; for as most of Mr. Hughes's company had been brought from the fairs, it may be reasonably inferred that their declamation was by no means of an exalted character.

Mrs. Entwisle was known to Mr. Wallack (father of the present performers) and Mr. Johannot (father of Mrs. W. Vining), each of whom were engaged with, and interested for, Cross and Astley, at different times. When the lady, as it was very natural she should do, complained of the disagreeable necessity of walking three miles home from Drury Lane in dreary nights, one mile of which was over a road-way, nearly impassable from mud, neglect, want of lighting, and, above all, from the very dregs of the community that infested it—when Mrs. Entwisle spoke of these hardships, it was natural the two gentlemen should suggest a remedy, especially if it were one bringing with it concurrent advantages. Miss Mellon was just the person they wanted. Though not a good pantomimist, she had all the requisites for becoming one. She had a fine person, sung agreeably, and would have been the

very fair ideal of their youthful heroines ; moreover, she spoke well ; and though little dialogue was then allowed, and even that was to be accompanied with the harpsichord, yet in occasional addresses they had long felt the want of a regular actress.

In 1799, Cross produced a pantomimic and dramatic spectacle, entitled “ Cora ; or, the Virgin of the Sun ” (founded on Pizarro) ; then “ Sir Francis Drake,” “ Rinaldo Rinaldino,” &c. In all of these Miss Mellon would have been a feature of attraction. Johannot urged to Mrs. Entwisle that her daughter’s situation at Drury Lane was precarious—that she was only retained to go on in the absence of others, and had no chance of making any fame of her own—that her pittance was miserable, and there seemed scanty hopes of its increase ; whereas, with Cross or Astley she could at once secure a greater salary, be made of importance, and would no doubt become so valuable to either of them that she might ultimately make her own terms.

Mrs. Entwisle, no doubt, saw all these advantages, and weighed them well ; but she also saw the tremendous disadvantages attendant upon such a change. The line of demarcation has long been removed. Our minor theatres now contain some of our best performers, and the distinction is nearly lost between patent and unpatented houses ; but in 1800, to go to a minor theatre (unless in such a case



as Palmer's, whose talent enabled him to do whatever he pleased) was to shut the door of Drury Lane against you for ever.

Miss Mellon wisely resolved upon poverty and respectability; and this, although Cross, who was suffering from a defection of his troops, would have given her double the salary she had at Drury Lane, or double anything which they would have advanced. This was not the only offer of such a nature which was wisely declined by her; as it was inferred that, after being among the Kembles, the Farrens, &c., she declined, from a principle of pride, joining "a troop;" for by that somewhat derogatory title were the equestrian and pantomimic companies known.

Old Astley had at this time a scheme in his head for rendering his theatre in Dublin what, in fact, our minors now are, and this scheme he succeeded in carrying out, despite all the opposition (parliamentary and otherwise), indictments, and actions of the patentees of the London and Dublin theatres. He rightly judged that many performers, who would not face the ordeal of the Amphitheatre in Westminster, would be less scrupulous in Dublin, where they were unknown, and ran no risk of encountering their acquaintance, who sustained places in the more elevated walks of the drama.

He made no direct offers; for at that period, if he had done so to performers already under articles,

he had but little doubt that he would have been proceeded against, on the principle of endeavouring to entice away retained servants; but he caused overtures to be made indirectly to many actors and actresses, and, among others, to Miss Mellon. A very brilliant prospect was held out; and it is possible she might have accepted a situation with him in Ireland, had it not fortunately happened that the necessities of Drury now called so frequently upon her services, that she was unconsciously become of importance to the theatre.

It is curious to reflect what change in the complexion of her fortunes might have resulted from her acceptance of Astley's offer. In all human probability she would in that case have never become Mrs. Coutts.

Towards the close of this year, some strolling players fitted up for a theatre a room at the George Inn, Epsom. Some one or more of these itinerants were known to Miss Mellon, and she promised to perform one night for a benefit; her name, however, was not to appear in the bills,\* but was to be mentioned round the town.

\* Attached to one of these bills is an announcement of Mr. Farrell, the union piper, who was to give a public breakfast on 28th July, 1800, at the Grotto, Prestbury; where there were to be the following diversions to please the ladies and gentlemen:

“A pig, whose tail will be shaved and soaped, to be given to the first person who can catch it by the aforesaid tail, and throw it

It may be questioned whether it was probable that she would prove attractive there ; but the strollers, it appears, thought so ; and Miss Mellon named, to a party in power at Drury Lane, her intention. He stated that he saw no great harm in it ; but advised her not to ask the stage manager, but to go, and keep her own secret. To Epsom she accordingly went. The theatre was adorned with a large carpet for a curtain ; two screens made the wings on each side ; and there was no scenery whatever. The good people of Epsom, however, mustered in great force ; and she was so much applauded, and so admired by the beaux of that racing town and its vicinity, that it was deemed very desirable to re-engage her services. As no ill had resulted from her first trip, impunity induced carelessness ; and, a remuneration now tempting her, she again appeared at Epsom, was again applauded to the very echo, and, in fact, deemed a great feature “ for that night only.” She returned to town the next day, reaching her lodgings about five, and found that a “ call ” had been left at her house, requiring her attendance for the rehearsal at eleven on that morning. This was the first time she had ever over his shoulders. To conclude with a race in sacks by two of the fastest running women in England.”

It is to be hoped that the patrons of the drama were devoted generally to more intellectual amusements than those offered by Mr. Farrell.

been absent from the theatre when her services were required ; and she became alarmed. She immediately sought out Wewitzer, who treated the matter lightly ; but said, he supposed she had been “ put down ; ” that is to say, marked in the prompter’s list to be fined. This, of course, increased her uneasiness ; and on reaching the theatre she hurried to the prompter to ascertain the fact. It was so. The amount of the fine was a mere trifle, fines being in proportion to the salary of the performers ; but it was a serious evil to be suspected of inattention to her profession ; and it was evident that she had incurred that danger. Nothing further was said upon the business, save the exaction of the fine ; but Miss Mellon discovered that someone had been mean enough to write to the stage manager, informing him of the trip taken by the truant actress. Such was the strict discipline of Drury Lane at that period, that had not the manager been disgusted with the meanness of the anonymous writer, her freak would probably have cost Miss Mellon her engagement.\*

\* Those who are curious about the select few who formed the company at Epsom, will find their names recorded. The ladies were, Mrs. Askey and Mrs. Humphreys ; the gentlemen, Messrs. Langdon, Murphy, Humphreys, and Seabrooke ; and as a proof that the most humble aspirants to a niche in the temple of fame may at some time or other obtain it, it may be noticed that a bill of their performances (and probably the only one) is yet extant, and carefully preserved in the library of the British Museum !

## CHAPTER XII.

Continuation of theatrical career—Miss Mellon visits Southampton—Private theatricals—Contemporary actors and their salaries—Expenses of Drury Lane—Theatricals continued—Actress's paint.

FOR the two succeeding years Miss Mellon's history contains hardly anything worthy of record—beyond a repetition of similar events—and her continued, though slow, rise in her profession.

On the 6th January, 1801, “*Inkle and Yarico*” was performed at Drury Lane. The characters of *Yarico*, *Wowski*, and *Patty*, were supported, for the first time, by Mrs. Crouch, Mrs. Mountain, and Miss Mellon. After an encomium on the two former, the *Dramatic Oracle* says, “Miss Mellon in *Patty* seemed next to attract attention, and very justly. The archness and cunning, the pertness and loquacity, of the chambermaid, she admirably exhibited; and such an exhibition must be acknowledged to evince no inferior powers of comic delineation.”

“The Double Gallant” was revived on the 20th, in which Miss Mellon played *Wishwell*. The *Morning Chronicle* in its critique says, “The sum of comic abilities displayed last night was considerable. Miss Mellon obtained great applause in *Wishwell*. Where playfulness rather than sensibility is to be portrayed, she certainly stands unrivalled. Had *all* the performers been equally *perfect in their parts*, the play would probably have been received still better.”

Miss Mellon was now only in her fifth season; and being without patronage or interest, had no means of attaining a high cast of character; yet it is evident, by the gradually increasing praise of the critics, that unaided she was making her way in public estimation, by her talent, good humour, and good looks.

January 27th, she played *Wishwell*, in the “Double Gallant.” 28th.—*Lydia Languish*. March 12th.—*Alethea*, in the “Country Girl;” Mrs. Jordan performing *Peggy*. April 10th.—*Celia*, in “As you like it,” to Mrs. Jordan’s *Rosalind*.

In the summer of this year (1801), Miss Mellon received an offer to perform at Southampton, for the first time, from Mr. Maxfield, the respectable veteran manager of that circuit, who is still living. It has been frequently stated that “she was in the habit of performing at the Portsmouth Theatre,

where her handsome appearance secured an overflowing house among the officers of the garrison and the harbour." This is quite erroneous. Mr. Maxfield was manager of all the theatres on the circuit; and he says Miss Mellon only played one season for him, that being at Southampton.

She was greatly admired in that town for her *naïveté*, sweetness of maner, and that buoyant good-humour which seems to have been the most winning charm of her style.

Her characters at Southampton were, *Rosalind*; *Albina Mandeville*; *Priscilla Tomboy*; *Angela*; *Aura*, in the "Altered Custom of the Manor"; *Peggy*, in the "Country Girl;" *Lady Teazle*; *Letitia Hardy*; *Violante*; and *Lydia Languish*.

These performances were very highly patronized; and although her engagements at Liverpool, and other more profitable circuits, did not allow her to revisit Southampton professionally, it was a favourite rallying-place during her summer tours in after years, and on arriving there she always referred with pleasure to the kind patronage she had formerly received.

On the 24th September, Drury Lane reopened, and the "Wheel of Fortune" was performed again, with Kemble's matchless *Penruddock*. Miss Mellon maintained her own part of *Emily Tempest* with increasing merit, as appears from the following



criticism: "Miss Mellon, by a pleasing mixture of vivacity and tenderness in *Emily*, strongly indicated an improvement in her profession." Another critique gives the young comic actress a lesson not to spoil her pretty face by crying: "Miss Mellon appeared as *Emily*, and gave to the part a high degree of interest from her captivating sprightliness. However, she should never attempt seriously to cry; the audience, accustomed to her merry face, thought she was jesting, and hailed her tears with laughter."

In the theatrical notices of the contemporary press may be traced Miss Mellon's improvement both as an actress and in the estimation of amateurs. On the 24th October, she performed *Berinthia*, in the "Trip to Scarborough;" and the *True Briton* of the day following attributes to her a polished style, and declares her to be an accomplished representative of all elegant comedy, praising the success of her efforts for the point and precision with which she delivered the dialogue.

On the 6th of the following month, the reproduction of the "Wedding Day" procured for Miss Mellon the part of *Lady Contest*; and, according to the *Dramatic Magazine*, she "played so well, and looked so pretty, that there arose a considerable *contest* in the house who should congratulate her most heartily on her *Wedding-day*."

It was not only by the public that the young

actress was sought after: her services were sometimes required for the private theatricals with which the nobility occasionally disported themselves; and we find by a treasured relic of those days that, on the 28th of the same month (November), she formed part of a *dramatis personæ* at the Hon. Mrs. Damer's, Strawberry Hill.

This relic—a “bill” printed in due form—proves that her playmates on this occasion were of no ignoble rank. The performances consisted of “The Fashionable Friends,” and “Lovers’ Quarrels;” acted by the Earl Mount Edgcombe, Messrs. Berry, Brownlow North, Campbell, Burn, and Mercer; Lady Elizabeth Cole, Mrs. Burn, the Misses Berry, the Hon. Mrs. Damer, and Miss Mellon.

Besides performing parts in both the pieces, Miss Mellon undertook the character of stage-manager, besides being privy-councillor in all matters relative to costume and other little etceteras known only to the initiated in Thespian mysteries. That her office of manager was no sinecure may be inferred from a remark she afterwards made, and which, at this distance of time, we may venture to repeat—that “there never was such a stupid task as drilling fine people!”

So high had her services at this period risen in public estimation, that her absence from the theatre only one night was not allowed to pass unnoticed. During the same evening she was performing with

the "fine people," the "Old Maid" was being acted at Drury Lane; and the *Messenger* complained of the character of *Mrs. Harlowe* having been allotted to Mrs. Humphries. "The part," says the critic, "should have been played by Miss De Camp or Miss Mellon, for the piece deserves the *best* comic performers that the theatre will afford."

After having represented *Miranda*, in the "Tempest," on the 23rd and 26th of December, Miss Mellon played *Estifania*, in "Rule a Wife, and Have a Wife," to John Kemble's *Leon*; on which occasion the *True Briton*, of January 6th, 1802, compliments her for very excellent acting in a part that demands much taste and judgment.

The name of Mrs. Jordan, and the character of *Nell*, in "The Devil to Pay," are so completely identified, even at the present time, that it must have required no little reliance on her own powers to induce Miss Mellon to undertake the character, with the impressions of her prototype's acting so fresh upon the public mind. On the 2nd of January, however, she mustered sufficient courage to personate the part, and had the good fortune to succeed in it. She might have owed a portion of her success to having had so excellent a *Jobson* to play to as Bannister.

The 11th of October, 1802, was rendered somewhat remarkable by the return to the stage of Mr. Cherry, after a cession of *twenty years*. The char-

acter he chose for his reappearance was, *Sir Benjamin Dove*, in "The Brothers;" the *Sophia* of the play was Miss Mellon, "whose acting," criticizes the *Messenger*, "only wanted a little more anxiety and distress at the discovery of her supposed lover's baseness to be as interesting as the author could possibly intend she should be."

Those who knew the extreme gaiety, even in later days, of her to whom this notice alludes, can readily suppose her expression of sadness must have cost her no small effort—her imitation of sorrow must indeed have been "getting up a sad face." The criticism was possibly a just one; yet, on the other hand, it must not be forgotten, that when once performers become popular in comic characters, they get but little credit for portraying sentiment, be it ever so well done. Liston's *Octavian* was, we have heard from an eye-witness, a highly creditable performance; but then "mirth had marked him for her own," and the audience seemed to consider it as a sort of fraud upon their risibility that he did not burlesque the part, and withheld their applause for pathos, to one from whom they expected fun. It is not unlikely that a similar feeling on the part of her audience prevented Miss Mellon in *Sophia* from receiving the commendation she may have deserved. This opinion is much strengthened by the criticisms on her *Emily Tempest*, quoted in a former page.

She was, however, more successful as *Lady Con-*

stant, in "The Way to Keep Him," which she played on the 8th of November. She finished the year in the part of *Berinthia*, which she performed on the 31st of December.

Mr. Boaden has, in one of his Dramatic Biographies, given a list of most of the salaries at Drury in 1802; and it is an interesting document, inasmuch as it proves that large sums were then, as now, given to performers of great talents. John Kemble, as actor and manager, had £56 14s. per week—that is to say, forty guineas per week as an actor, and fourteen guineas per week as manager. The latter was paid throughout the whole year; the former, during the season only: his annual income from the profession thus exceeding two thousand per annum. Mrs. Siddons had forty guineas per week, or about twelve hundred guineas for the season; and Mrs. Jordan, nearly one thousand guineas. At that period, as at the present time, where money was lavished upon one, it was doled forth in a truly parsimonious spirit to others. Thus, Mrs. Sparks,\* the *Mrs. Malaprop* of the theatre, had but £3 per week; Grimaldi, the inimitable, only £4; and Mrs. Crouch's salary was reduced by one-half in consequence of her having been somewhat disfigured by the overturning of her

\* Miss Mellon, on her accession to fortune, settled an annuity for life on Mrs. Sparks, who was a most respectable and valued old friend of hers.

carriage! Dowton we find at £8, but King and Suett were then living, and in possession of all the capital parts in the line in which he excelled.

Out of the following list of managers and actors (many of whom were very young at the time) only nine survive:

THEATRE ROYAL, DRURY LANE.

					£	s.	d.
Mr. Kemble, as actor and manager	...	...	...	...	56	14	0
Bannister	...	...	...	...	17	0	0
King	...	...	...	...	16	0	0
Pope	...	...	...	...	13	0	0
Kelly	...	...	...	...	16	0	0
Wroughton	...	...	...	...	15	0	0
Suett	...	...	...	...	12	0	0
Dowton	...	...	...	...	8	0	0
C. Kemble	...	...	...	...	10	0	0
Barrymore	...	...	...	...	10	0	0
Byrne, ballet-master	...	...	...	...	8	0	0
Palmer	...	...	...	...	9	0	0
Wathen	...	...	...	...	8	0	0
Raymond	...	...	...	...	8	0	0
Wewitzer	...	...	...	...	6	0	0
Sedgwick	...	...	...	...	6	0	0
Powell	...	...	...	...	6	0	0
Holland	...	...	...	...	5	0	0
Caulfield	...	...	...	...	4	0	0
Powell, prompter (he had emoluments besides)	...	...	...	...	4	0	0
Dignum, tenor-singer	...	...	...	...	4	0	0
Cooke, bass-singer	...	...	...	...	4	0	0
Grimaldi	...	...	...	...	4	0	0
Parker	...	...	...	...	3	0	0
De Camp	...	...	...	...	3	0	0
					£255	14	0

Mrs. Jordan must be taken at an average. She was sometimes paid more than thirty—nay, sometimes fifty guineas a-week—but the average gives	...	...	...	...	31	10	0
Siddons	...	...	...	...	42	0	0
Crouch	...	...	...	...	14	0	0

(Next year after her accident only £7.)

Miss De Camp (the late Mrs. C. Kemble)	...	12	0	0
Mrs. Mountain	...	12	0	0
Bland	...	12	0	0
Pope	...	11	0	0
Young (late Miss Biggs)	...	10	0	0
Powell	...	10	0	0
Ansell	...	5	0	0
Miss Mellon	...	5	0	0
Tyrer (Mrs. Liston)	...	5	0	0
Mrs. Harlowe	...	4	0	0
Miss Menage	...	3	0	0
Mrs. Sparks	...	3	0	0
Misses Hicks, Campbell, Henry, Southey, and C. Campbell, £3 each	...	15	0	0
Mrs. Byrne	...	5	0	0
<hr/>				
£199 10 0				

Gentlemen, including stage-manager	...	255	14	0
Ladies	...	199	10	0

To this is to be added at least twenty persons who received £2 or £1 10s each, say... 35 0 0

Amount received by the four persons in power—

R. B. Sheridan, Esq.	...	31	10	0
— Richardson, Esq.	...	15	15	0
— Grubb, Esq.	...	9	0	0
T. Sheridan, Esq.	...	6	10	0
<hr/>				
£552 19 0.				



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Other expenses, including lighting (wax candles were then used), printing, servants, say ... ..	100	0	0
Rent, interest of £129,000, say £130,000, would be £6,500 per annum, which, as the theatre was open thirty-two weeks, gives a trifle over a weekly rent of ... ..	200	0	0
	<hr/>		
The total weekly expenditure of old Drury Lane, not including the payment of dramatic authors ... ..	£852	19	0

On the 7th of January, 1803, Miss Mellon appeared in a character which was a great favourite of her own, and consequently not the less relished by her audience,—*Cherry*, in “The Beaux’ Stratagem.” This performance must have been, in later years, a cherished reminiscence, for she frequently quoted from the play. She played the part again on the 22nd of the same month.

On the 3rd, 10th, and 18th of January she repeated *Lady Constant*, in “The Way to Keep Him.” On the 14th and 27th she personated *Patch*, in the “Busy Body;” and on the 20th, *Violetta*, in “She Would and She Would Not;” but the crowning event of the month was her accession to the character of *Mrs. Page*, in the “Merry Wives of Windsor,” on account of the illness of Miss Pope. Her success in this attempt—one which she had ever been ambitious to make—was always treasured up in her memory as her most pleasing dramatic recollection.

She retained the identical dress worn on that occasion; and, after her second marriage, produced it at St. Albans House during a debate concerning tableaux. Sir W. Beechy painted a full-length portrait of Miss Mellon in this character, which has been twice engraved.

Miss Mellon succeeded Mrs. Bland in the part of *Alexa*, in "The Hero of the North," on the 29th of January. The *Dramatic Critic* decides in favour of the change, and remarks that, "though Mrs. Bland's great vocal attractions were useful, yet, considering the situation in which the character is placed, Miss Mellon's fine figure is much better fitted for it, in addition to her greater merits as an actress." In the month of February she was almost nightly before the public, in the characters of *Lady Constant*; *Cherry*; *Alethea*, in "The Country Girl;" and *Alexa*.

On the 16th of April, Allingham's comedy of the "Marriage Promise" was played for the first time, Miss Mellon having rather a sentimental part, of *Mary Woodland*. The *True Briton* says, "C. Kemble, Dowton, Mrs. Powell, and Miss Mellon, exerted their respective talents with the happiest effect. Miss Mellon spoke the epilogue with considerable archness." This piece was nightly repeated until the 3rd May.

On the 11th of May, for the benefit of Palmer and

Suett, Miss Mellon, for the first time, played, *Rosaria* in “She Would and She Would Not,” her character in that piece having hitherto been *Violetta*.

Miss Mellon having now, without patronage or interest, established herself as a favourite in public estimation, thought (with the advice of her craving family) that she might venture on a half benefit, even in huge old Drury. The partaker in the benefit was Miss Stephens (afterwards Mrs. J. Smith), who was an elder sister of the since celebrated vocalist, Miss Catharine Stephens, the present Countess Dowager of Essex; to whom, afterwards, Mrs. Coutts was extremely generous and partial.

The play selected for this benefit, on the 1st June, 1803, was, “A Bold Stroke for a Husband,” thus cast:—

Don Julio ...	...	..	...	Mr. Russell.
Don Caesar	...	...	...	Mr. Cherry.
Don Carlos	...	...	...	Mr. Barrymore.
Don Vincentio	...	...	...	Mr. Collins.
Donna Victoria	...	...	...	Miss De Camp.
Ninette ...	...	...	...	Mrs. Harlowe.

and

Donna Olivia	...	...	...	Miss Mellon.
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After the play, “The Soldier Tired,” and several other songs, by  
Miss Stephens;

Followed by the “Scotch Girl;”

Concluding with

LODOISKA.

Before this year, Miss Mellon’s friends were few,

and her circle of acquaintance so limited, that she could only anticipate a loss if she had attempted to take a share in the house. She generally had, therefore, what is termed "a ticket night;" that is to say, she sold tickets to her friends, one half of the amount of which she gave to the manager, and retained the other herself. Her joint benefit house was very well filled.

On the 20th September, Irish Johnstone made his first appearance at Drury Lane, as *Charles Merton*, in the "Marriage Promise," Miss Mellon playing *Mary Woodland*, and it is really curious to observe, at that period, what trifling characters the best performers thought it their duty to take, if called on to do so, as may be seen in the following farce, a revival of old ingredients.

#### THE IRISHMAN IN LONDON.

Mr. Frost	...	...	...	Cherry.
Edward...	...	...	...	Bannister, jun.
Captain Seymour	...	...	...	Holland.
Colooney	...	...	...	Bartley.
Murtoch Delaney	...	...	...	J. Johnstone.
Caroline	...	...	...	Mrs. Sankey.
Cubba	...	...	...	Miss Tyrer.
Louisa	...	...	...	Miss Mellon.

All these performers are now dead, excepting Messrs. Holland and Bartley, and the wife of Mr. Liston, then Miss Tyrer.

On the 4th of October, "The Rivals" was per-

formed. Of *Lydia Languish* the *True Briton* says, "Miss Mellon displayed strong marks of improvement in this character; there was always spirit in her acting, and there is now more polish in her style." The *Post* remarks, "Miss Mellon, in *Lydia*, is entitled to no common praise. She has much of the *naïveté* and giddy cunning of Mrs. Jordan, with grace and simplicity spontaneously imparted by her own nature and judgment. The approbation she was flattered with was not inferior to her merits." The comedy was repeated very frequently until the holidays.

On the 3rd of January, 1804, Miss Mellon played *Alethea* to Mrs. Jordan's *Miss Peggy*; and the *Morning Post* says, "Miss Mellon, who in many respects most happily imitates Mrs. Jordan, drew, next after the latter, the greatest share of attention and applause. Her manner is full of sweetness, simplicity, and refinement."

*Celia*, in "As You Like It," which she played on the 7th of January, the *Dramatic Magazine* criticizes thus:—"Miss Mellon evinced all the tenderness and anxiety of friendship which characterizes a sensible heart, and seems admirably qualified for the natural delineation of such characters." Her principal parts during this spring were *Cherry*, *Lady Constant*, *Lydia Languish*, *Alethea*, *Dorcas*, and *Miss Prue*.

In speaking of the quantity of white paint used by English actresses, in comparison to what the French employ, Miss Mellon said, the latter showed their superior knowledge of stage effect ; for what was gained in complexion by paint was lost in expression.

Hence, many of our comic actresses, whose faces, off the stage, have the charm of varying expression, totally lose that advantage where it is most required ; and this because they choose to act behind a mask of white paint.

Miss Mellon said, she spoke from experience ; for when first she appeared in London, the theatre seemed so immense, and the distant audience looked so dark and dingy, that she thought her own brunette complexion would be proportionably deepened to a mulatto tint ; and forgetting that the chief recommendation of her face was its lively expression, she at first put on a coating of white powder, so as to resemble a simpering doll ; until wounded vanity soon convinced her of her error.

In one of her first London engagements, the envied character of *Lydia Languish* was yielded to her endeavours ; and as she had taken the utmost pains with the “ study,” so as to play her very best, she resolved that no negligence of toilette should mar her suitable appearance.

It was evident that the representative of *Lydia*

*Languish*, the lovely, young sentimentalist, should heighten all her natural advantages, and hide deficiencies, in order to do justice to Captain Absolute's taste. Accordingly, Miss Mellon, while sweeping the train of her dress before the glass to see that it folded gracefully, was resolved that her skin should emulate the white satin near it: for, like all brunettes, the first requisite for beauty, in her estimation, was the possession of a fair, transparent complexion.

Sending her mother, therefore, to borrow Sir Anthony's hair powder box and powder puff, she enveloped her face, neck, and arms in such a white coating as would have rivalled the faces of her friends the Staffordshire millers. Over this came rouge in proportion, like the red currant jelly on a shape of blanc-mange, until she scarcely looked human in her attempt to attain extra loveliness.

Thus arrayed, after a few more sweepings of her train and shakings of the powder puff, she descended and went through one or two acts, no one having had the good nature to tell her how completely she was disfigured, and as to herself, every time she looked at her alabaster reflexion in the glass she was additionally delighted to think that although the old king had sent a warning to Mrs. Siddons never to wear white paint, the present was quite a different case—*Lydia Languish* and *Lady Macbeth*!



At the end of the second act Suett, who was to play in the afterpiece, called the "Embarkation," and had been witnessing the comedy from the house "en amateur," came round to talk over the first part of it.

Going up to Miss Mellon, to whom he always told her faults and gave friendly professional scoldings, he exclaimed—"Why, Peggy, child, what a fright you have made yourself! Your little nose, glaring with white, looks broader than it is long, and as for your fat cheeks, they look like two of your landlady's muffins. How dare you put on so much white paint, eh?"

Miss Mellon was quite indignant that he had accused her of a crime which she had not committed, so she replied (making a distinction without a difference)—"I never wore *white paint* in my life, sir, and to-night I merely put on a little *white powder*."

"Well done, Peggy!" Suett replied; "both are meant to humbug, so the matter's equal. Shall I tell you for what you are suited with that quantity of white and red? Just let me lengthen the corners of your mouth upwards, and then you will be ready to act as clown in the pantomime."

She was very angry, and gathered up her satin train to depart to her own room, her friend calling to her—"Go and wash your pretty face, Peggy; go and wash your nice, brown, merry face."

Too wise even in her anger not to take some opinions besides her own, she applied to the dresser, who had not witnessed the hair-powder addition, This experienced dame sided completely with the old actor, and Miss Mellon, finding herself in the minority, wisely determined not to take the "powder as before."

Mahomet insists upon all the faithful performing daily ablutions, forgetting that half their days may be spent in a desert, where the means of doing so are not to be procured, thus making whole caravans cheat their conscience by pouring sand over themselves, pretending to fancy it is water. In like manner Miss Mellon's eccentric old friend desired her to *wash the powder from her face*, forgetting that in all probability it would decline to come off. In fact, so it proved; she had put on such a quantity that on the application of water it formed itself into "vermicelli," whose little rolls adhered past all management to her face. Most heartily did she then wish she could see her unappreciated brown complexion looking no darker than usual, or else that she could restore the white powder to its late mask-like appearance. But this was impossible from the moisture of the underlayer; however, by dint of great exertion she and the sympathizing dresser removed the most prominent portions and applied a little fresh carmine, so she was ready when

called, and with smarting red cheeks had to go through the concluding and best scenes.

When the play was ended the old actor came up, and peering into her face, said—"Why, Peggy, my child, you look as if you had been *mixing* your landlady's muffins now,\* and the paste had fallen all over your face. But you bear a scolding very well, Peggy, and you've played your character very well also. Now go home and eat some muffins, and remember my maxim, that those who chiefly please by arch expression and manner should never act behind a mask of white paint, or, as you call it, *only a little powder*, Peggy, child!"†

\* Mr. Silcock, with whom she lodged in Little Russell Street, was a painter and glazier. His wife kept there a little shop, and sold milk and muffins.

† Why Suett changed her name from Harriot to Peggy none but himself could tell, but these unmeaning changes are not uncommon in the theatrical world, I understand.

## CHAPTER XIII.

Love and courtship—Its unlucky termination—New friend—Mr. and Mrs. Entwisle remove to Cheltenham—Joint benefit at Drury Lane—Visits Cheltenham—Anecdote—Story about “green peas !”

ABOUT this time Miss Mellon formed a romantic attachment, which must have had a powerful influence over her mind, for the remembrance of the disappointment evidently closed her heart ever afterwards against a similar feeling.

A gentleman named Barry, recently arrived from the West Indies, possessing considerable advantages of appearance and manner, had been introduced to her, and had paid her attention for some time.

Mrs. Entwisle, finding that Harriot was not insensible to his proffered regard, was much incensed that all her care and ambitious schemes should terminate in her daughter's marriage with one of their own rank.

The lover had to undergo a serious ordeal from the considerate matron as to "his means of supporting Harriot, whose prospects he would destroy in taking her off the stage." But he was firm under the examination, and answered readily as to his family connections and expectations, mentioning a lady of good property (known to them) as his aunt, to whom he was heir.

Foiled in the hope of interrupting the course of true love, Mrs. Entwisle was obliged to let it flow in the path so inferior to what she had projected; at least, she had no excuse for positively putting a stop to the bright current, but it had to chafe and fret round the obstacles she constantly flung in its career.

She still maintained her careful *surveillance* in protecting her daughter while from home; and, in the parties of pleasure to Vauxhall, and places within their means of reaching, she always enacted *chaperon*. When these had been proposed and arranged by the lover, the fitful woman often would suddenly refuse to go, assigning as the reason one of those headaches (or temper spasms) which ladies summon so easily, and Mr. Barry would be dismissed for the day. Poor Miss Mellon would then have to sit at home in her holiday costume, disappointed and mortified, and listen to long histories of the trouble which mothers took

for their ungrateful daughters' amusement and interest. Mrs. Entwisle always concluded with descriptions of illness (contradicted by her full, rosy countenance), and lamentations that, in her old age, she should not have a carriage, like other ladies whose children were on the stage.

All this was sufficiently annoying to the hasty-tempered object of her lecture, whose vexation generally gave way in tears. But the final proceeding of Mrs. Entwisle was to assault the character of the man who interfered with her ambitious prospects ; and there was scarcely anything too bad to affix on Mr. Barry during his absence.

The most placid female heart will not endure an attack on the object of its affections in absence ; the most timid mind will then summon an unsuspected energy, in repelling the "galling fire ;" and it will not be supposed that the easily-excited Miss Mellon calmly suffered these attacks to pass unheeded or unanswered.

The discomfort of such scenes it were needless to describe, where a violent, determined woman chose perpetually to counteract the first attachment of her warm-hearted child, whose freshness of heart endowed its object with every perfection that could be conceived.

Miss Mellon had often endured temporary violence, nay, actual cruelty, from her mother, who

would soon afterwards become as wildly indulgent; but, in this instance, where the ruling passion of her nature was crossed by her daughter's romantic attachment, her former alternations of good and bad temper seemed to have settled permanently into the latter. Under these circumstances, Miss Mellon thought her heart must break; when, fortunately, she discovered that invaluable resource for an over-charged young heart, a *confidante*! At the house of one of her benefit patrons, she had, some time previously, been introduced to a very beautiful girl; and they commenced that degree of intimacy in which young women delight, extending to the mutual loan of books, music, or patterns, as excuses for morning gossip: a pastime in which Miss Mellon loved to indulge.

It happened that, during the height of her mother's displeasure against Mr. Barry, Miss Mellon's new friend called to pass the morning with her; and, as they stood at the window together, the individual who occupied Miss Mellon's thoughts passed, and bowed to her friend.

On inquiry, it appeared that he was a very intimate acquaintance of the latter and her family—a recommendation for them with Miss Mellon beyond any other that could have been advanced at the time. Miss Mellon, with all a woman's infatuation for the tastes of one she loved, at once re-



solved that "*his* friend should be *her* friend, and she would have none other." From that time her regard was fixed on the young lady; and, from the trifle of a passing bow, arose an attachment which led to these young women living together thirteen years, without the interval of a week's separation!

All the long-suppressed griefs were gradually unfolded to her new friend; and the history of her attachment confided, without the name of the party; but the little arts women employ to hear that name pronounced by others which may not be uttered by themselves, are so palpable to all except the infatuated speaker, that a constant companion can scarcely remain in ignorance on the subject.

In the meantime, the banished lover, who vainly sought an opportunity of meeting Miss Mellon without the maternal guardianship, was fearful of losing the fair object of his affections; and he ventured on the rash experiment of sending a letter to her which reached her hands unseen and unsuspected.

This letter contained the usual protestations, the perusal of which for the first time creates a momentary paradise in the untried mind; until it is startled, in the course of time, by receiving similar words from another, and another; and the once-duped heart suspects bitterly that none among them could have been genuine. Miss Mellon had but just opened this illumined page in the book of life, and as yet had not turned to its reverse.

Mr. Barry proposed their immediate marriage, and that she should leave the stage, as his means were amply sufficient, through an allowance given him by his opulent aunt, to support them in private life; and after the decease of his relative, their fortune would be considerable. His evil genius must have dictated, and watched over the delivery of, this letter, for it was fatal to the plan it was intended to effect. Miss Mellon, enchanted with its contents, was bewildered as to a suitable reply; and her new *confidante*, just then coming in, was admitted to the secret, which she knew already, viz., the name of the gentleman; his proposal was also confided to her.

To this her friend raised no objection, beyond Mr. Barry being considered totally without property. Miss Mellon refuted this by the story of the rich aunt, to whom he was heir; and that, even at the present time, the allowance she made to him was sufficient to admit of his bride leaving the stage: in confirmation she showed the letter.

It is needless to dwell on this circumstance beyond stating that *the whole story was a fabrication as to the aunt*, that lady being, in reality, aunt to Miss Mellon's new *confidante*, and merely an acquaintance of Mr. Barry, who was a person of no property! His attachment, therefore, to the handsome Miss Mellon was not without interested motives, for he must have calculated on her remaining on the

stage and exerting her talents for their mutual support.

Miss Mellon had been too well inured to poverty and privation in her youth to dread encountering a moderate degree of it for one in whom her affections centred. The vision of a *cottage ornée* had many times floated in her imagination as being delightful, even for those who could command splendour; therefore, had Mr. Barry candidly stated himself to be "a bankrupt in all save love," her romantic heart would have rejoiced in devoting itself to his interests. But he had mistaken her character, as worldly men frequently cannot understand the generous, unsophisticated natures they are judging by the world's rules, and thus deceive themselves by over-cleverness. By not venturing on what he deemed the "rash experiment" of telling her the truth she was lost to him for ever. She hated anything like deceit, and all her life considered mystery and evil to be nearly synonymous, even in the common intercourse of society. But when she detected a premeditated deception towards her in one whom she considered perfection, her proud nature resolved to sacrifice him, cost what it might to her heart. He received a decisive refusal, and they never met again. Miss Mellon left town for a provincial engagement. With cruel kindness her friends united in persuading her that she had not

been the object of a real attachment, thus adding an unnecessary pang—the most cruel to a proud woman—that she had bestowed her affections where they were unrequited. When she returned to London she learned that the gentleman had embarked for the West Indies, and within a short time he died there.

This circumstance apparently seared her heart against risking that “fatal dream again;” for all who knew her unite in saying she never afterwards showed the least preference for any one of her admirers.

The disappointment of her affections did not render her unjust or capricious in friendship. The young lady who was first liked for her friend’s sake was now regarded for her own. Every act that kindness could suggest was lavished on her by Miss Mellon, who could not bear her absence, and whose affection being in one instance thrown back on itself seemed to have acquired more depth for those in whom she trusted.

The regard between these two amiable young women was so great that Mrs. Entwisle’s violence was passed over unheeded by the stranger, for the sake of her daughter’s society, and she now began to look on their house almost like her own home.

About this time Mr. Entwisle, being no longer engaged in the orchestra in Drury Lane, and nothing

else offering in London, thought he would try his fortune in the sale of music at one of the watering-places. Mrs. Entwisle was of course to accompany him, and Miss Mellon, who remained attached to the theatre, was to have her young friend to live altogether with her in Little Russell Street. This arrangement was very desirable for the sake of peace, the two young women living quietly together, visiting Mrs. Entwisle whenever the theatre was closed, and not seeing enough of her to renew former painful scenes, while Mr. and Mrs. Entwisle followed their own pursuits without the check which the superiority of Miss Mellon and her friend must have imposed.

They went to Cheltenham in March, and opened a music shop in the High Street, letting the upper part of the house furnished.

Miss Mellon took a joint benefit with Mr. Barrymore on the 24th of May in this year, by which both parties realized a considerable sum. The play selected was "First Love." It was cast thus —

Lord Sensitive ...	...	...	Wroughton
Sir Miles Mowbray ...	...	...	Downton
Frederick ...	...	...	Barrymore
Bluster ...	...	...	Suett
Sabina Rosni ...	...	...	Mrs. Jordan
Lady Ruby ...	...	...	Miss Mellon

This was succeeded by "The True Lover's Knot," and the "Gentle Shepherd."

When the Drury Lane season terminated at the end of June, Miss Mellon went immediately to stay with her mother in Cheltenham, and in order to render this duty not incompatible with her profession, she accepted the offer of the manager of the Cheltenham theatre to perform there for a few nights. The engagement, which was for five nights and a benefit, was a very good one, and the benefit produced a considerable sum.

Here again she had an opportunity of playing the parts of Miss Farren and Mrs. Jordan, which she had under-studied so carefully. On July 3rd she played *Letitia Hardy*, in "The Belle's Stratagem," and *Nell* in "The Devil to Pay." On the 5th, *Miss Peggy* in "The Country Girl," and *Maria* in "The Citizen." On the 7th, *Miss Dorillon* in "Wives as they Were," with *Cowslip*. On the 10th, *Amanthis* in "The Child of Nature," with *Roxalana*, and on the 12th Miss Mellon took her benefit as *Widow Cheerly* in "The Soldier's Daughter," and *Nell* in "The Devil to Pay."

In order, probably, to enhance the value of her appearance, Miss Mellon would only engage herself for this short time, after which she made another tour to Liverpool and reaped a golden harvest.

It seems to be a singular fact, that wherever she performed in the provinces, although not a first-rate actress, she always secured the largest benefits.

There was a general feeling in her favour, from her unaffected good-nature, cheerfulness, industry, and the probity of her nature, which seemed to lead the inhabitants of each place to give their best support. It is quite astonishing in these parsimonious days to hear of the sums of money sent to her benefits by families who had known her from youth; and she never returned to London without some hundreds of pounds collected by her provincial engagements and benefits.

Cheltenham had proved so profitable, that Mrs. Entwisle advised her to return, and to try the experiment of another benefit. Accordingly, in September, she re-engaged herself for three nights there, performing on the 6th, *Miss Peggy*, with *Mrs. Kitty*, in "High Life;" and on the 8th, her favourite, *Rosalind*, in "As you Like it," with *Lady Contest*, in the "Wedding Day."

A great patroness of hers was there—the late Viscountess Templetown, the amiable Lady Mary Montague, daughter of the Earl of Sandwich. When Miss Mellon's second benefit was announced, Lady Templetown bespoke the pieces,\* and mentioned

\* The play-bills are still extant, at Mr. Shenton's, Cheltenham. "September 11th, 1804. Under the patronage of Lady Templetown, for the benefit of Miss Mellon. 'The Child of Nature.' *Amanthis*, Miss Mellon; with 'Lovers' Quarrels,' *Jacintha*, Miss Mellon. To conclude with 'The Midnight Hour,' *Flora*, Miss Mellon."



her *protégée* so effectually among the distinguished visitors at Cheltenham, that the second benefit exceeded the first.

On the 15th September, Miss Mellon was again performing at Drury Lane. The inhabitants of Cheltenham were greatly impressed by the extraordinary affection subsisting between Mrs. Entwisle and her daughter. Every substantial comfort, every trifling ornament for her house, was sent in profusion; every article for which the former could find a use, or expressed a wish was procured instantly by her attached child; and this affection extended to her step-father also, whose tastes were considered in every way by Miss Mellon, in gratitude for his early kindness. He had a severe fit of illness while she was there, and the affectionate solicitude, care, and anxiety she evinced until his recovery, could not have been greater had she been his daughter; impressing everyone with a conviction of her warmth of feeling and the excellence of her disposition.

Another object on whom she delighted to lavish her affection was the young lady who resided with her. Miss Mellon would never enter into any amusement that her friend did not partake; and in her own very extravagant toilette she not only presented her companion with equally expensive materials, but even to the most trifling articles she

always purchased two precisely alike, that both might appear in them together.

From this uniformity of dress they were generally mistaken for sisters, although Miss Mellon's friend had the advantage in personal beauty.

The Duchess of Devonshire used to quote the dustman's compliment to her eyes as the most flattering one she ever received. Miss Mellon used to say the only civil speech made to her, which was worth remembering, was from two old men, selling vegetables in Covent Garden as she and her friend passed. "There's a pair of sisters," said one observer; "the tallest one a king might marry." Miss Mellon felt quite envious of her friend's success; until the second man of cabbages exclaimed, "Yes, so he might; but as for the dark-eyed one, I would marry her myself;" which he evidently thought the higher lot!

When Mrs. Entwisle visited London, on the disagreeable errand of borrowing the money which her daughter might have saved from a benefit or a country engagement, she always began in a most peevish and irritable mood. This arose, perhaps, from the consciousness that she was doing wrong towards her daughter; as self-dissatisfaction frequently seeks a pretext to find fault with an object whom conscience suggests has been ill-used.

On one of these unpleasant occasions in Little

Russell Street, early in the year 1804, Miss Mellon was unable to give the sum demanded. The old theme of her small salary was then made the channel of various reproaches, and the success of other young *débutantes* was forcibly contrasted with the cast of parts assigned to Miss Mellon—just as if the latter, the principal party concerned, could not be alive to mortification without having it pointed out to her. Mrs. Entwisle then entered into a self-laudatory account of all she had done for her daughter; including dramatic instructions which would have made anyone else a second Mrs. Siddons; but, unfortunately, her daughter “was a block, a stupid, giggling thing, satisfied at being tied down to comedy and forty shillings a-week for the rest of her dramatic life.”

Then followed accounts of her own sufferings and privations, when her feeble health and delicate appetite (she was a model of robust health and strength) required to be sustained by the luxuries of the table. “Any other woman,” she would remark, “who had brought up a child with such care, would have been rewarded by seeing her at the head of her profession, and at the top of the list of high salaries. This would enable her to keep a carriage for her kind mother, and to secure delicacies for her declining years. But a spiritless, muddling creature, content to laugh and live on

forty shillings a-week, could never have the means, if she had the will, of being kind to anybody."

The hasty Miss Mellon was not likely to endure these goading reproaches in silence; therefore a clash of warm tempers ensued, in which every mutual grievance was recapitulated.

Mrs. Entwisle wound up her list by saying, that "the poverty of her daughter not allowing of niceties for her mother's failing appetite, must cause the death of the latter, which would lie at Miss Mellon's door, because she did not study and strive to advance in her profession."

"Suppose even I *were* rich, mother, what could you fancy?" inquired Miss Mellon.

"You *know* what I should like, you careless, unfeeling creature; my only fancy is for some ham and green peas."

"Green peas in winter, mother! Why, Queen Charlotte herself has not green peas now."

"She does not want them, perhaps, so much as I do; but leave the room, Harriot, for you have worn out my spirits with your ingratitude."

As her sitting apartment in those days was limited to the singular number, she had nowhere else in the house to go when ejected from that one little room; for it was Sunday morning, and the good old muffin seller below had just set out to church, leaving the shop and back parlour in total darkness.

Miss Mellon therefore put on her poke-bonnet and cloak, and resolved to take a walk until her mother's "delicate nerves" had subsided to a reasonable state of quiescence. For this purpose she crossed Covent Garden Market; the church bells had ceased tolling, and the greengrocers were hastily closing their shops, when, just between the last two shutters of a window, she espied what she had considered a luxury beyond Queen Charlotte's reach—a pint of green peas.

Here, then, was the object of her mother's longing within her reach; and could she hesitate because a hasty word had passed between them?

The shutters were now closed, and the shopman gone in; but she tapped at the door, and stated her errand. The man regretted extremely, but it was now during the forbidden hours, and he dare not incur the penalty. She urged that no one would be aware of the matter but themselves; that it was to gratify the fancy of a poor invalid; and, at last (she had been ready to cry before), the force of her own eloquence brought down a shower of her tears to aid the persuasion.

The man of peas could not withstand such an appeal; the half door was opened to admit Miss Mellon, and then closed altogether; a candle brought from the inner room, and the coveted vegetables were placed on the counter.

As they looked to be about a sixpennyworth in

the ordinary season, she made up her mind to pay six or eight times that amount for the rarity, and asked the price. It was half-a-guinea.

She considered for a moment that her lodging and other expenses of last week were to be paid out of the salary which she had received late the preceding evening. It was but a moment's pause, however; the forty shillings were untouched in her purse, and the object of her mother's fancy was before her; so she paid the sum and tripped away with her prize, one of the happiest beings in London.

Re-entering the house gently by means of a latch-key, she unfastened the windows of the ground-floor apartment, prepared the fire, and put down the peas to boil, with some ham which was in the house.

When her landlady came home from church she chid the young actress for such unsuitable occupation, instead of waiting for her return, when she would have attended to the culinary preparations. But Miss Mellon would not relinquish her post. She had resolved that the "delicacies" should be prepared by her own hands; and when they were ready she placed them in a close-covered dish, as a little surprise for the violent parent who had treated her so harshly.

The wondering Mrs. Silcock, who was let thus far into the secret, was to carry up the dinner, and to leave the door open so that Miss Mellon might enjoy

hearing her mother's exclamations of surprise before she entered the apartment.

Accordingly, the neat little table was laid for two persons; the dishes placed on the table before the sullen inhabitant of the room, who was angry with herself for having been unreasonable; therefore, longing to find just cause of anger against some other person, she drew near with a discontented countenance—Miss Mellon watching for the effect of her little surprise through a crevice of the door. But when the covers were removed, and Mrs. Entwisle found that all her harshness had not been able to banish her daughter's good-nature, instead of uttering the expected exclamation of pleasure, she threw herself on her knees, called every blessing on the head of her daughter, poured forth a torrent of self-accusation, and called on Heaven to punish her unnatural wickedness towards an angel! The over-excited daughter, who was listening to her in agony, interrupted the penitent's appeal by falling insensible into the room.

By the time she was restored, Mrs. Entwisle had calmed herself down from her passionate contrition, and these two warm-hearted but high-tempered beings had one of those soothing and perfect reconciliations which are only known to those of hasty, but forgiving, temperaments.



## CHAPTER XIV.

Theatricals continued—History of the “Honeymoon”—Secession of Mrs. Jordan—Succeeds to her characters—Benefit—Green-room—Obtains the office of postmaster for Entwisle—House at Cheltenham—Master of the ceremonies—Benefit at Cheltenham—Mr. Coutts—First acquaintance with Miss Mellon—The purse of “luck money.”

THE next year, 1804, Miss Mellon played *Lady Ruby*, in “First Love.” The part had been originally sustained by Miss Farren, and, subsequently to Miss Mellon’s assumption of it, was transferred to Miss Duncan; but at the close of the year she had an original part, *Polly*, in the “Land we Live in.”

Miss Duncan’s appearance and Mrs. H. Johnston’s engagement kept Miss Mellon comparatively idle. Her services were principally called for in “The Apprentice,” “Mock Doctor,” “Irishman in London,” and “Honest Thieves.” She had likewise

attained a standing in the theatre that made the management tenacious how they sent to her in emergencies, as heretofore; and the consequence was, that what was meant as kindness or forbearance, actually militated against her popularity. An actress seldom seen becomes speedily unappreciated. Fortunately, about this time a comedy, which to the present day has maintained its place upon the stage, was sent to the theatre.

The fate of that clever, but certainly not very original, play, "The Honeymoon," has been made the subject of much cavilling against "the powers that were" in our two great theatres. It was rejected both at Covent Garden and at Drury Lane.

The responsibility of success or failure of a play rests as much upon the manager as the author, and the most experienced of either class cannot decide on the probable success of a drama until it has withstood the test of public opinion or faction. Therefore it is not matter of surprise that the former should pause ere they produced a comedy the plot of which was palpably borrowed from "Rule a Wife and Have a Wife," from "Taming the Shrew," and "Twelfth Night," every one of the situations in which had been often on the stage before, whilst many of the speeches were paraphrased from Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher, and others.

Wroughton's interference prevented the piece

from being returned, upon the following ground : \* —He could not deny the justice of the remarks made upon "The Honeymoon ;" but he urged that a mixed audience were not so likely as themselves, the manager and actor, to detect a plagiarist. "It is effective, though it is not new ; besides," said he, "we can cast it so well."

If the literary argument had no effect, a strong cast would always sway a manager—it was accepted. Wroughton read it in the green-room. Bannister was undecided as to its success. Miss Mellon, Elliston, and Miss Duncan voted for it, but most of the other persons present shook their heads and said "it would not do ;" but, as often happens in such cases, it was triumphantly successful. Mrs. Jordan, on reading the part of *Volante*, declared she had no objection to act it ; but when she read the play, she found *Juliana* too good. If she played the latter, which she might have done, then *Volante* would have been too power-

\* The fate of its author was certainly a hard one. After vainly striving for years to have a piece performed, he heard of the acceptance of this when consumption had nearly completed its ravages on his constitution. Part of the inscription on a tablet to his memory, at Cork, tells the story of his melancholy death—"Sacred to the memory of John Tobin, Esq., of Lincoln's Inn, whose remains are deposited under the adjacent turf. He died at sea, near the entrance of this harbour, in the month of December, 1804, on his passage to a milder climate, in search of better health. Aged 35."

ful. She therefore determined not to act in the piece at all, and she was the more strengthened in this resolution as Miss Duncan has just obtained great success, and was likely to become a dangerous rival. Mrs. Jordan did not play for some weeks in consequence, but returned to the theatre to take her benefit.

Mrs. Jordan's secession materially injured the cast in the estimation of the managers ; but someone having proposed Miss Mellon, the suggestion was warmly seconded by Bannister, and the part, equally to her surprise and pleasure, was sent to her house. It was one most peculiarly suited for her, and no one since has been able to produce anything like the effect she communicated to it.

From the 31st Jan., 1805, when it was brought out, it kept her continually before the public for many seasons in the most favourable light.\* A fine coloured engraving of her in this character, after a portrait by Sir Wm. Beechy, was brought out, and sold rapidly ; and this season she ventured, upon the strength of her popularity, to take a benefit on

\* Of "The Honeymoon" and *Volante*, by Miss Mellon, *The Weekly Messenger* says, "Miss Mellon has one of the best female characters ; we except not Miss Duncan's. There is more archness and comic sprightliness in the part, and it was admirably adapted to her talents." *The Morning Post* writes, "The character of *Volante* is most aptly suited to Miss Mellon's lively acting, and we never saw her to more advantage."

her own account. She was not permitted by the rules of the theatre to play "The Honeymoon," but took on the 21st May, 1805, for her first benefit alone in London, "The Merry Wives of Windsor," playing *Mrs. Ford* herself.

As the history of the painting above alluded to, and from which the portrait in the frontispiece is taken, is somewhat curious, we subjoin the account as given by Sir Wm. Beechy himself.

An individual, whose daughter was much patronized by Miss Mellon, was employed by Sir William to furnish for his infant daughters some of those back-boards and collars which keep little heads upright while puzzling over their lessons; and the value of these articles, which were delivered at different times, amounted to about fifteen pounds. On being asked for the account, however, the man hesitated, and hinted something of wishing for a picture in exchange; and Sir Wm. Beechy having always patronized him, said he would paint him any portrait he would select. The individual being too happy at procuring a sixty-guinea picture on such easy terms, begged it might be the likeness of his daughter's kind friend, Miss Mellon, as *Volante*, which was accordingly done, and the picture given to him.

In the course of a few years this person was in prison, without any pecuniary means; from which

distress he had no hope of extrication but through the assistance of her whom he had attacked through the press and calumniated past forgiveness. A young picture-dealer, who pitied the extremity of distress to which the wretched man had reduced himself, suggested the possibility of (the now) Mrs. Coutts buying the portrait, if it came through other hands. The prisoner seized on the idea, consulting Sir William Beechy as to what he should demand for it. The latter advised them to name merely the sixty guineas which it would have cost if ordered. The picture-dealer had not the money, and Sir William advanced it to him, which saved the bandage-maker from starvation.

When Mrs. Coutts returned to town, the portrait was offered to her by the picture-dealer, but as she had already four others by the same excellent artist (and they dared not mention the ungrateful person for whom it was intended as a charitable relief), she declined the offer. Here, then, was the picture, originally given away by the painter, and now bought back again with his money. At length, when Mrs. Coutts understood the case, she purchased it. The picture-dealer charged her seventy guineas.

Some years afterwards, the same person being in some extra strait, wrote to his patron and supporter, Sir Wm. Beechy, that "the latter had behaved in-

famously to him, in advancing only sixty guineas for a picture which he had immediately resold to Mrs. Coutts for one thousand guineas; and that unless he sent the applicant fifty pounds he should be shown up all over England through the press!"

This letter of ungrateful falsehood, of course, met no answer; and in a short time another came, increasing the threat, but lowering the alternative to thirty pounds. This was also treated silently; and a third came, lowering even to twenty pounds. A similar fate attended the whole. The writer died, reduced by his bad conduct to the most wretched position, and leaving his memoir in MS. The portion relating to his former patron was sent for Sir William's perusal; and then he found the undying enmity and falsehood of the lost man had perpetuated the calumny about the £1,000. The memoirs, however, were known to be false, and the author's character so notorious, that no publisher would undertake them.

But to return. Miss Mellon's success in *Volante* having been greater than that of any other performer in the piece, raised her so high in public estimation, that everyone now was endeavouring to hint "they had long before made the discovery of Miss Mellon's brilliant talents, beauty, and wit."

Her benefit during the height of this excitement was crowned with extraordinary success. It was



quite a point among theatrical amateurs to send a handsome tribute of their admiration for *Volante*, in exchange for a ticket; and the *ci-devant* poor little player girl now found herself mistress of considerable savings from her professional engagements.

She had also become a person of consideration in the green-room—a sun round which the fashionable planets were happy to revolve. Everyone was delighted to oblige “the *Volante* ;” and ten minutes’ conversation with her was considered distinction for the evening.

Among those who had the power as well as the inclination to be of service to her was Colonel MacMahon, at that time continually with the Prince. Discovering at once his amiable character, Miss Mellon had candidly told him that although the emoluments of her profession sufficed for her own wants, she was deeply anxious to secure for her mother some provision against her old age, and the feeling appeared to him so creditable that he promised his influence when she could point out where it would be useful.

Everything seemed to take place just as she wished; the situation of *post-master* just then became vacant at Cheltenham, and Miss Mellon (who perhaps had the credit of flirting at the moment with those around her in the green-room) urged Mr.

Entwisle's cause so sincerely that the situation was given to him through the solicitations of his grateful step-daughter.

She was the joyful messenger of her own good news, and never was anything so happy as the family meeting.

Those who remember Cheltenham some thirty years ago will be well aware how inferior it then was in point of extent and fashion to its present condition, although "coming events" had already "cast their shadows before," and the influx of visitors each year increased.

Mrs. Entwisle's keen perception did not slumber respecting this change, and as she was constantly studying how to advance the fortunes of her family, she formed a plan by which they might benefit greatly by the increasing fashion of Cheltenham.

At that time there were but few houses at the part of the town called Cambray, although, from its open situation, these were eagerly sought by visitors during the season. Mrs. Entwisle's plan, therefore, was that Miss Mellon should embark every shilling of her benefit money in the building of a house there, which, being let furnished, would return an interest of at least fifty per cent. on the sum embarked.

Miss Mellon, who had not shaken off her leading-strings about pecuniary matters, agreed to this project. A piece of ground at Cambray was

obtained, a "reasonable" builder undertook the contract, and the whole of her savings were set apart for the completion of this house. They did not, however, amount to the requisite sum; but in a small gossiping town it was soon known that "Miss Mellon was building, by her savings, a house for the benefit of her mother," and the motive was so unostentatiously good that various tradesmen supplied requisite articles, and promised to wait for payment until the house made some return to its young owner.

There must have been something unusually winning and genuine in the disposition and manner of Miss Mellon, for it would be tedious to enumerate the number of instances in which the money-making minds of tradespeople seemed to take a higher tone of generosity in her favour, and as she was always punctual to the hour in repaying their obligations—for which she ever afterwards evinced the warmest sense of gratitude—they were (as they deserved to be) gainers in more ways than self-approval for performing a charitable action.

The actress by care and frugality was now owner of a house, which, on its completion, was immediately taken for the season at an excellent rent for those days, enabling Miss Mellon partially to pay her friendly creditors. Mrs. Entwisle rejoiced in her own forethought, and talked of a future range of houses, thinking, perhaps, of *a whole street!*

One circumstance they had overlooked, as many wiser amateur builders have done in their plans, namely, that although the unoccupied ground opposite their house left at this period an uninterrupted view from their window, a time might come when that "non-interference" would cease, and a building might start up to impede their *prospects* in every sense.

Such was the case with Miss Mellon's speculation, the success of which attracted a host of imitators, and the piece of ground directly facing her house was immediately purchased for building on by Mr. King, the master of the ceremonies.

An official of such importance in a small town, who had the arbitrary power to recommend or dissuade fashionable strangers respecting the different tradespeople, was soon enabled to complete his opposition house, and by the next season Mrs. Entwisle found that Mr. King's new staring building intercepted the view from her house, and injured the letting of the latter exceedingly.

One result always followed her troubles—an appeal to her daughter, and the present application was that Miss Mellon should come down again to Cheltenham to perform and have a benefit, so as to counterbalance the injury received by Mrs. Entwisle through the means of the master of the ceremonies.

Mrs. Entwisle, by her frank, lively manner and love of gossip, was very popular among the middle

classes, so that with her innate skill she had always the power of "making good her own story" to a large majority, who, in their turn, spread the story further; and, therefore, when she detailed how "hardly the master of ceremonies had behaved to the dutiful child who had relinquished every shilling of her earnings for her mother's support," there were few residents in Cheltenham who did not hear of and sympathize in the tale.

Miss Mellon accordingly came down to gather a golden harvest from such well-prepared ground. Her female friend of course accompanied her, and when these two handsome and ladylike young women, guarded by the Argus parent, Mrs. Entwisle, went round to request patronage, it may be supposed that few were inclined to refuse them. In short, Miss Mellon's benefit was such a dazzling triumph over the mortified master of ceremonies that it is said he never forgave it.

At that time there was among the visitors at Cheltenham an elderly invalid gentleman who did not join in society, but passed many hours daily taking exercise in the Long Walk. Mrs. Entwisle soon discovered from hints dropped by his servant to the lodging-people, who, however, did not know his name, that "his master, notwithstanding his penurious appearance, was considered one of the richest people in London, but that he was very un-

happy in consequence of thinking that his wife, also advanced in years, was going out of her mind, which preyed on his spirits so much that he had been ill, and was now trying Cheltenham for a change."

Her immediate reflection was that the richest gentleman in London might take a box at the theatre for the benefit night, though he were ever so sad, and this idea was communicated to her daughter. A respectful note of solicitation to that effect was given to the attendant at the pump-room a few days before the performance to present to "the remarkable-looking old gentleman," but as no answer was returned, the three females decided that "the moping, thin, old creature was too full of his own troubles to care about those of other people."

On the day but one after sending their note Miss Mellon and her friend were sauntering very early in the Long Walk, when they were overtaken by the old gentleman.

He introduced himself to Miss Mellon, whom he said he knew by sight in Drury Lane green-room, to apologize for not having sooner answered the application, for which he accounted by a great pressure of London correspondence ; but he trusted his silence had been considered an assent to patronizing her laudable filial efforts, of which he had heard admirable accounts at every turn in Cheltenham.

The young ladies tendered their best thanks and brightest smiles ; their new friend mentioned that he had had the pleasure that morning of sending to the post-office his answer respecting the box ; and after a conversation of some length they separated, mutually pleased.

On hastening home, they found Mrs. Entwisle in ecstasies. There is no knowing what grand visions had been conjured up in her wild brain ; but the tangible circumstance was, that she held in her hand an open letter from the old gentleman, “ the richest person in London,” who had enclosed five guineas for a box, which he desired should be kept for Mr. Coutts ! Mr. Coutts !—THE Mr. Coutts !—well might the servant hint that his master was “ the richest person in London ”—a man whose name was a proverb of wealth even in country towns. Thus Mrs. Entwisle raved, wondering at her husband’s stupidity, that when anyone had called for letters for Mr. Coutts, he had not directly guessed he was the thin old gentleman, and told her so ! But the young friends defended Mr. Entwisle, by exclaiming against the idea of anyone supposing that the *great* Mr. Coutts, who managed the royal family, and commanded everything he liked, could be an old, pallid, sickly, thin gentleman, in a shabby coat and brown scratch wig.

Peace was soon restored, as Mrs. Entwisle was in



a sunny humour after the day's adventure. The new acquaintances met generally in their early promenade in the Long Walk; and when the day of the benefit performance arrived, Mr. Coutts paid Miss Mellon the compliment of promising to occupy the box, although he had only taken it to patronize her, without intending to go.

As a mark of Miss Mellon's strong superstition regarding good luck, may be given the following pendant to the foregoing facts:—

The money sent by Mr. Coutts for the box chanced to be the largest sum in gold she had ever yet received from any one individual. In the envelope which enclosed it he had commended her industry, good reputation, and perseverance, and concluded by saying, he trusted she would find that his trifling present would prove to be "*luck-money*."

In her enthusiastic manner she instantly declared that nothing should ever tempt her to part with these her "first five golden guineas," which, sent with such kind wishes, were sure to bring her good fortune. They happened to be guineas just fresh from the mint; and she put the bright coins apart in a separate purse, often showing them to those who knew the circumstances; and she frequently endured temporary privations rather than change any portion of her "lucky money," the only thing

she was ever known to refuse to her mother's rapacity.

On the day of her marriage with Mr. Coutts she produced the well-worn purse, with its glittering contents, and twelve years afterwards its faded glories were again shown to a bridal party when she became a duchess.

## CHAPTER XV.

Season of 1805-6 : critique on a play which did not appear—  
“The School for Friends”—Master Betty—Charles Lamb  
and “Mr. H.”—Destruction of both the royal houses by fire  
—Sir John Duckworth : his taste for Melons and passion for  
pigs—The “Mock Doctor”—Mrs. Entwisle a promoter of Mr.  
Coutts’s marriage with her daughter—Mr. Coutts’s worsted  
stockings—Mr. Coutts mistaken for a man in distress.

At the opening of Drury Lane Theatre for the season, commencing September 20th, 1805, Miss Mellon presented herself on the scene of her former successes in the character of *Volante*, in “The Honeymoon,” and was greeted with three distinct rounds of applause on her entrance upon the stage. Bannister, Elliston, and Miss Duncan received a similar compliment.\*

On the revival of “The Constant Couple” (9th October, 1805), she was the *Angelica*. The piece had been announced for the 5th, and on the 7th a

\* *Morning Post*, Sept. 21, 1805.

flaming critique appeared, abusing a performance that had not taken place, for which the actors so abused brought an action, and recovered damages.

A new comedy, by Miss Chambers, called "The School for Friends," was produced on the 10th of December, the character of *Lucy*, a merry waiting woman, having been allotted to Miss Mellon. The play was voted dull, not surviving many nights; and the representative of *Lucy* had the credit of saving it from sudden condemnation. The chief point in the piece was the *tendresse* made by *Daw*, a rigid Quaker, to the gay, laughing waiting woman. The passion being mutual, works the marvellous change of altering *Lucy* into a Quakeress, and, at the finale, she suddenly appeared in the prim costume of the Friends. This plain, simple dress became her exceedingly; and prettily drawling out, "Yea, verily, he hath converted me," she seldom failed to bear away the final applause. "The School for Friends" was repeated on the 1st, 3rd, 7th, 9th, 15th, and 20th of January, 1806.

Miss Mellon's career during the rest of the season was as triumphant as her warmest friends could have wished, and ought certainly to have satisfied the extravagant expectations of her sanguine mother. The management of Drury Lane seemed to have considered her a "tower of strength;" for in all the newspaper advertisements her name was the

only one mentioned, as performing in the various pieces for which she was announced. Up to the 17th of May the only event deserving record was her appearance in "Miss in her Teens," Master Betty, the young Roscius, performing *Captain Flash* to her *Miss Biddy*. Miss Mellon did not take a benefit this season.

During this year (1806) an artist made a drawing of her in the character of the *Comic Muse*, which was soon afterwards engraved and published.

This plate is pronounced by her contemporaries to have been an unusually good likeness. Strange to say, considering the line of acting of the subject, and the character in which she is represented, that the expression of the face is pensive; that of her eyes amounting almost to sadness. This shade of melancholy will be found to pervade all her earlier portraits, except that by Sir William Beechy, of her as the laughing *Mrs. Ford*. It appears to be one of the principal changes effected by the course of time, that her expression latterly was more joyous than sad.

The costume of this personification of the *Comic Muse* is much more decorous than artists would bestow on her in these liberal days; the robes having sleeves half way down to the elbow, and the drapery being fastened high and close round the shoulders. Such, however, was the taste of those days (more

refined than classic); and the decorum of the dress was so great that the costume of the Muse occasioned Miss Mellon to feel uneasiness lest the painter's selection might be supposed to have been her dictation.

Mrs. Entwisle also, who used to show her extent of affection by proportionable scoldings to its object, gave poor Harriot a most severe lecture on "her stupid folly, and the painter's impudence in presenting the public with such an improper picture."

When the late Charles Lamb's farce, called "Mr. H.," was produced, he cast his own piece, and Miss Mellon was the heroine, and Elliston the hero; but alas! (Tobin alone excepted) it was her fate to deal with a most unfortunate set of authors; even men of established reputation, such as Lewis and Lamb, managed to fail in the pieces in which it was her misfortune to essay.

In 1807, Cherry added another to this melancholy list; in his "Day in London" she had a good part, but the piece only lived three nights.

On November 1st, 1807, H. Siddons produced a weak play, entitled "Time's a Telltale," in which she sustained the character of *Lady Delmar*. This play was, like its precursors, unsuccessful.

In 1808 she had another original part, and Mrs. Jordan, Dowton, Matthews, and J. Johnstone were also in the piece; yet, despite this phalanx of

talent, the farce went the way of all condemned dramas.

A dreadful fire took place on the 20th September of the following year, by which Covent Garden Theatre was burnt down, with a number of the adjacent houses; and a great many lives were lost. Miss Mellon, who was a great coward respecting fire, was almost out of her senses at the proximity of the flames to her house in Little Russell Street. But when a report arrived that several walls had fallen in and buried a number of poor creatures, her whole anxiety was for their rescue from their dreadful sufferings, if still alive. Accordingly, with her usual promptitude, she took every measure to aid the great cause of humanity.

The compiler of these volumes, on the evening after the fire, when returning home from school under charge of one of her father's servants, begged hard to be taken to see the ruins. The crowd was alarming; and the servant carried her as near as was practicable, which was to the theatrical bookseller's shop, nearly opposite, which is still kept there.

Many workmen were engaged in digging out the bodies of the unfortunate persons who were buried under the ruins; and they worked by torchlight at their sad occupation.

At the door of the bookseller's shop was placed a



large barrel of ale, ordered by Miss Mellon, from which the labourers were supplied by her directions. In the drawing-room window above stood Miss Mellon herself, all anxiety, earnestly urging the men to proceed, and offering five pounds for each of those who were brought out alive, and two pounds for each body of the hapless creatures who perished.

She was dressed in a blue satin pelisse, looking lovely in her anxiety; and each time she appeared at the window she was received with animated cheers by the crowd, who seemed ready to worship her.

While remaining there, eight individuals were exhumated, and Miss Mellon distributed her rewards; but life was extinct in all, and they were carried to St. Paul's churchyard, Covent Garden. Many theatrical persons were in the room with Miss Mellon while engaged in her laudable exertions. Surely this instance deserves a record here, as it will have one hereafter!

This was followed the succeeding year by the destruction of the rival house. On Friday, the 24th February, 1809 (Lent), Drury Lane Theatre was burnt to the ground. A fire had been left in the upper coffee-room at four in the afternoon, and there being no performance, all the servants were out of that part of the theatre; it is supposed that it ignited and caught the wood-work. At eleven at night it was discovered that the theatre was in

flames ; which, at three o'clock, were nearly extinguished. In that short space of time, a theatre that had cost £129,000, and was not then completed, was reduced to one huge mass of ashes and rubbish.

After a few nights' performance at the Opera House, the Chamberlain consented to the company's using the Lyceum. The defection of Elliston, Mrs. Jordan, and others, threatened to prove injurious ; but Mrs. Edwin was engaged, and, during the run of her attraction, Miss Mellon was in a degree shelved.

At this theatre she had another unfortunate original part, in a peculiar short-lived farce, entitled "Sharpset."

In the vacation of 1809, Miss Mellon proceeded to Plymouth, and her success at that theatre was very great. The following anecdote, she used to relate, was the subject of much pleasantry at the time :—

"The eccentric Sir John Duckworth was port-admiral at that time at Plymouth, and he devoted his leisure hours most impartially between his two hobbies—the culture of fruit and the improvement of pigs. The former was the origin of the single pun recorded of him ; small enough most certainly, but repeated then, in Plymouth, with the due respect for 'the port-admiral's jest.' A numerous party were invited to a *déjeuner* at the admiral's

house, to admire the produce of his garden, and Miss Mellon had accompanied one of the officers' wives by the host's request, who, with the first Lady Duckworth, always patronized her and theatricals generally. As may be supposed, however, the handsome London actress was a greater magnet for the younger officers than the contents of the fruit dishes; and the admiral's vanity was wounded. When the party broke up, he observed that the midshipman who had been her most assiduous beau was secreting a small pine-apple, and, guessing it would be an offering of gallantry to the attractive actress, he asked what was to become of it? The saucy young culprit replied, 'Sir, our melancholy mess are *inclined to pine*.' The admiral stuttered out, 'While *you*, I perceive, only *pine* for Mellon!' and taking away the 'apple of discord,' presented it himself to the London belle."

In those days, the officers used to tell a story with reference to Sir John Duckworth's porcine fancy while afloat;—for he kept as many pigs on board as he did on shore; and used to barter them with the ward-room or midshipmen's mess, who were not so well provided with fresh provisions.

One day, after having effected one of these good bargains, on returning to his cabin he heard a dreadful screaming above, and, running on deck, he learnt that a pig had jumped overboard: the ship

was going at an immense rate past Spithead, in a heavy sea, but in an agony he stuttered to the first lieutenant, "Back the yards, back the yards; lower a boat, there's a pig overboard; my pig—pig—pig will be drowned." One of the little middies, who had anticipated a feast from their recent bargain, most humbly observed, in a sad tone, so as to be overheard, "It is *our* pig—our poor little, new pig!" "What—what?" stammered Sir John Duckworth; "*their* pig—their pig: keep on your course, Mr.—, we must not risk—risk—risk men's lives for a pig, poor thing; they can buy another!"

On the 14th October, 1811, Miss Mellon played *Mrs. Jaundice*, in a farce called "The Green Monster." The piece, by Pocock, was a poor affair; but her performance was justly extolled; the part, in fact, was the original of *Mrs. Simpson*, in "Simpson and Co."

This season she was much praised in a chamber-maid of the old school, *Violetta*, in "She Would and She Would Not;" and as the piece was played pretty frequently for the sake of Mrs. Davison (*née* Miss Duncan), Miss Mellon was again often before the public.

The part about this time in which she still kept her great hold upon public favour was *Dorcas*, in "The Mock Doctor," which has been before men-

tioned as one of her best characters. The piece rests entirely upon the characters of *Gregory* and *Dorcas*; and those two, as they were then sustained, kept up the popularity of this farce (from Molière) for many seasons; the characters are few, and thus cast:

MOCK DOCTOR.

Sir Jasper	...	...	...	Mr. Maddocks
Leander	...	...	...	Mr. J. Wallack
Gregory	...	...	...	Mr. Bannister
Dorcas ...	...	...	...	Miss Mellon

From the period of the first introduction of Mr. Coutts to Miss Mellon at Cheltenham, a constant and friendly intercourse was kept up between them in London. There is little reason to doubt that this friendship was promoted by the scheming Mrs. Entwisle by every expedient she could devise.

The strict limits of biography, perhaps, should be confined to merely narrating such events as have reached the author, without any comment or supposition as to motives—which can hardly ever be given without a chance of offending parties connected by relationship with the subject of remark.

The present instance is, however, an isolated case; for Mrs. Entwisle (the only relation of Miss Mellon ever known) died long before her daughter, and there being no descendants on whom a comment might reflect, there is a singularly open field for the

candid biographer, who need not fear a chance of wounding others in freely expressing opinions.

On this principle, then, we will give here our ideas regarding the conduct of Mrs. Entwisle and her daughter towards Mr. Coutts.

Numbers of their warm advocates assert that they had no idea of Mr. Coutts becoming attached to and marrying Miss Mellon; but that they merely sought to take advantage of a weak and rich old man's patronage as long as it would last.

*From this opinion we differ totally.* Let it be remembered how ambitious Mrs. Entwisle was, how unceasingly watchful to advance her child's position in the world, how careful (even ostentatiously so) regarding her daughter's moral conduct, never letting her be out alone, even when in humble life; so that she might bring with her a thoroughly good reputation. In addition to her ambition, Mrs. Entwisle was selfish, and inordinately fond of money. Hence, she had prevented her daughter from marrying through affection, because the former would derive no improvement in situation by it. She was clever, artful, and scheming, like the generality of the Irish peasantry; and, considering all the qualities together, we have little hesitation in expressing an opinion that *from this first introduction to the old banker she had marked him for her daughter's husband.*

We see and hear of such plans daily in the higher circles, where the system is for young innocent girls to try and barter their hands for rank and wealth, no matter how revolting the possessor of those advantages may be; and in these nefarious schemes we know that jewelled matrons lend the most incessant aid to their beauteous daughters, by plots to "take in" anyone they mark down as fair game.

Why not, then, an humble edition of Almack's practices in Mrs. Entwisle and Miss Mellon? A legal gentleman, long in the busy world, has assured the writer that there existed a bond between Mr. Coutts and Miss Mellon that if she would remain unmarried while his invalid wife survived he would marry her whenever his hand was free to offer. Of this we know nothing beyond the assertion.

It is well known that agreements had existed in the case of Miss Farren and other females of her profession, highly respected in private life afterwards; and in our own times the engagement of the much-esteemed Miss Stephens, which has been protracted to so late a period, has been no secret.

On their return to London the conduct of Mr. Coutts shows clearly that he intended to place Miss Mellon at the head of his house: for one of his earliest proceedings was to present her to his three daughters, the Marchioness of Bute, the Countess of Guilford, and Lady Burdett. From the time of Mr.



Coutts's first acquaintance with Miss Mellon, until his wife's death, these three irreproachable ladies were on the most sister-like habits of intimacy with Miss Mellon. They were at her house in Little Russell Street continually, the shopkeepers there recollecting their wonder at such grand carriages waiting for hours at so poor a place. They used to meet their father there by appointment, or call to take him home. These ladies were married to men of the world, and had daughters grown up; therefore there was every reason why they should have looked with rigid scrutiny at the stranger whom they invited to their houses, and at whose house they allowed their children to stay. They used frequently to make parties to lunch with Miss Mellon. The Marquis and Marchioness of Bute, with Lord Dudley Stuart and his sister, Lady Frances Sandon, did so several times; and, what is more marked, Miss Mellon was at their country seat, Petersham, near Richmond. In one of her bedrooms in Henrietta Street there were four pretty little white beds, which were occupied by four of Sir Francis Burdett's daughters when staying with Miss Mellon.

Miss Mellon's manner towards Mr. Coutts, which was totally different from her careless style, was doubtless the result of her mother's tutorage, and certainly was politic in the extreme. It was steady and respectful, like a daughter, perfectly free from any

levity (everyone who knew the parties state this), and, to prove her respect, no office was too humble ; for instance—she never allowed a servant to open the door when he knocked, but either went down herself or requested the young lady living with her to do so.

From her steady demeanour she was generally considered by her friends to be *an acknowledged daughter of Mr. Coutts*, and from the friendship shown to her by his daughters they had possibly formed a similar conclusion.

As for Mr. Coutts himself, he was exactly the sort of person, and in exactly the position, to fall in with Mrs. Entwisle's schemes. He was eccentric, and very shrewd in worldly matters, but open to being won by "a soft word," as the royal brothers, and many needy dandies of the peerage, knew. Then there was a strong vein of romance—high-flown romance—beneath all this shrewdness ; also a great love of witty society, and more especially that of the green-room.

His position, notwithstanding his wealth, was lonely in the extreme as regards a domestic circle of affection ; for his daughters had been long married, and his poor wife, through the infliction of the Almighty hand, was not companionable, or even sensible of his presence.

It will be readily seen what a chance there was for the wheedling Irishwoman and her respectful daughter, when they received a visit from the solitary millionaire, and devoted themselves to preparing all the trifling comforts which servants would not do of themselves, and their master (engrossed in business) forgot to order. In time, he regularly took his luncheon in Little Russell Street at two, and if his family wanted to see him they knew where to go.

As an instance how the richest man in London was neglected by the lazy menials, over whom there was no female inspection, may be mentioned a circumstance which Mr. Coutts himself used to relate with great mirth, and which the friends of Mrs. Entwisle heard from her vain lips also.

Mr. Coutts was complaining to her one day of the extreme numbness he felt in his arms, and also that he was scarcely able to endure the pain of walking, although ordered to do so daily, for the benefit of his failing health.

She naturally suggested that his sleeves might be too tight, and his shoes and stockings might not fit him comfortably; but added, in her good-natured Irish way, "Sir, if you will do me the honour of putting one of your flannel waistcoats and a pair of your stockings into your pocket to-morrow, and

bring them here at luncheon-time, perhaps I can suggest some change to relieve your sufferings."

The next day accordingly "the rich man" brought the samples of his wardrobe, and even Mrs. Entwisle, with all her respectful policy, could scarcely avoid laughing outright. The waistcoat had been worn, patched, and washed so often, that it had shrunk into a little yellow hard thing, quite incapable of elasticity, like a washed glove. The worsted stockings were equally harsh from frequent washing, and had been darned in lumps over and over again, until it was no wonder the poor old gentleman was pained by walking in them.

Mrs. Entwisle requested two days for consideration how to alter them, and she improved her time so well, that at the end of that period she produced a dozen of newly-made flannel waistcoats and also of new stockings.

When the old gentleman saw them he laughed heartily, and said, "I protest, ma'am, you have understood admirably the complaint in my wardrobe, and I really believe, if it had not been for your kindness in thinking for me, I am so busy that I could not have thought for myself; so I should have continued hide-bound to my last days!"

He used to talk of this accession to his comfort

repeatedly, just like a poor man for whom she might have made them in charity.

We do not give the anecdote as anything very elegant, but it is strongly characteristic of the lonely position in which he was placed, and the watchful care for his comfort which our Irish politician was ready to show or suggest.

Mr. Coutts was a remarkably shabby dresser, however; so that the fault does not rest entirely on those who had charge of his wardrobe. He was a tall, thin, spare figure, and his clothes, always ill-fitting, bore that appearance of being “rubbed at the seams” which reveals the “business coat” of an office. He was often mistaken for an indigent person, and used to enjoy the mistake of all things. The following is one of many instances :—

Mr. Coutts, from his too strict attention to the bank, felt his appetite diminished; and, in order to afford him a little exercise, his physician ordered him to walk daily after the bank closed to a chemist’s, who resided at some distance from the Strand, to have some tonic preparation made up. So quiet and unassuming was he in his manners, that he always made way for everyone who came while he was at the shop, so that they might be served before him; and, with his fair, delicate countenance, spare frame, and very simple

dress, no strangers guessed that they were pushing aside the opulent Mr. Coutts. A kind-hearted, liberal man, a merchant—who used to quit his counting-house about the same time that Mr. Coutts left the bank, and who had chanced to be in the chemist's shop two or three times at the hour when the latter came there—had remarked him, and, from his retiring, gentle appearance and actions, concluded he was a reduced gentleman, whose mind was superior to his means. Accordingly, this charitable merchant resolved to administer to the necessities of the shrinking, modest individual; and, one day, having sealed up a sum of money for the purpose, he went to the chemist's shop, where he remained a length of time, waiting anxiously for the appearance of the latter,—who, however, on that day did not come for the tonic, being probably too much engaged in distributing thousands.

The stranger being at length tired of waiting, and feeling ashamed of occupying a place in the shop so long, told the chemist how the absence of the pale, indigent, elderly gentleman had prevented his intended donation.

The chemist in amazement said: “And you really meant to offer pecuniary aid to that person, sir? Have you no idea who he is?”

“None,” said the other; “but I conclude he is

some gentlemanly man, in distressed, or, at least reduced, circumstances.”

“ You shall judge, sir, as to his circumstances : —that unassuming, quiet individual is THOMAS COUTTS ! ”

END OF VOL. I.







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